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NAPOLEON AND MACHIAVELLI

FRANK PRESTON STEARNS

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NAPOLEON AND MACHIAVELLI

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NAPOLEON
AND
MACHIAVELLI

Two Essays in Political Science

BY

FRANK PRESTON STEARNS
AUTHOR OF "MODERN ENGLISH PROSE WRITERS"
"SKETCHES FROM CONCORD AND APPLEDORE"
"THE LIFE OF BISMARCK" ETC.

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In Memoriam

CYRUS COBB

PATRIOT, SOLDIER AND SCULPTOR

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PREFACE

If there is a science of politics, it must be developed as other sciences have been, by an examination and comparison of historical *data* with a view to the discovery of the causes which underlie important political phenomena, — and not, as is too often done, by judging of such phenomena according to purely empirical rules. It is equally fallacious to justify political action by its results, or to condemn it on *a priori* grounds; and it is only by the application of the inductive method that revolutionary periods, like those of Machiavelli and Napoleon, can be properly understood.

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NAPOLEON AND MACHIAVELLI

THE MAN OF DESTINY

THE French Revolution raged like an awful conflagration, in which human beings, not buildings, were consumed; and when it had burned to ashes, there stood Napoleon, like a compressed little god Thor, the most perfectly developed man of action in modern times.

Lord Bacon says, "Augustus Cæsar was endowed, if ever man was, with a greatness of mind, calm, serene, and well ordered; witness the exceeding great actions which he conducted in his early youth."

This estimate of Bacon's applies even better to Napoleon than to Augustus; for the latter, though he showed remarkable judgment and self-command at the time of his uncle's death, was not the general who won the battle of Philippi. It was Mark Anthony who carried the popular party safely through that crisis, and historians have not yet given him sufficient credit for this. The well-known bust of the young Augustus, which is in the Capitoline Museum, bears a resemblance to Napoleon, which all observers notice; but at a later time his head did not develop to such full, well-rounded capacity. If

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in addition to the qualities mentioned by Bacon we make a list of other virtues, such as diligence, punctuality, determination, readiness, versatility, correct observation, mental composure, firmness, and courage, Napoleon is one of the few historical characters who possessed them all. Then if we add a vivid imagination, a rare inventive faculty, and a ready appreciation of fine and beautiful things, we may turn him about and look at him, on every side, without finding a flaw anywhere in him. He seems to be a complete man. If not scrupulously veracious, he had at least a veracious nature; the nature of a man who loves good work in himself and others.

No doubt he was ambitious, but of what sort was his ambition? The quality of ambition, like the quality of love, depends upon the individual. It may lead to the loftiest virtue or the most contemptible vice. Ambition is a plant which requires the sunshine of opportunity. The more rapidly we succeed, the more ambitious we become. In every college class there are men apparently as ambitious as Napoleon was at his military school. Some of them die of it. A cheap ambition for superiority did not belong to him; his was of a more solid kind.

To attempt to penetrate Napoleon's motives by a preconceived opinion of him as an exceptional man, is a vicious method. If we judge him at all, we must suppose him to be actuated by the same motives which actuate other men under like conditions. The early death of his father left him with the responsibility of providing for four brothers, of whom Lucien alone possessed sufficient talent to make his own way

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in life. His family, never affluent, were obliged to be exceedingly economical. Under these circumstances a virtuous boy, as Napoleon certainly was, will feel that his first duty is to obtain a foothold in the great world, from which he can hold out a hand to the others. We hear that Napoleon was solemn and taciturn, "prematurely grave," in his youth, and this weight of responsibility is sufficient to account for the fact, without seeking an explanation deduced from the surprising events of his after life. It has even been supposed that he stunted his figure by hard study and exercise at the military school; but at the same time it is certain that he did not injure his health. From the time of his first military success Napoleon's personal ambition is so interwoven with the necessities of his time and of his country that it is impossible to separate one from the other.

Perhaps the most remarkable trait in his character is revealed in the fact that his confidence does not appear to have been ever misplaced. He surrounded himself with the most honest men in France, and though he also made use of tricky and unprincipled persons, like Talleyrand and Fouché, he always knew just how far they were to be trusted. When during the hundred days Fouché was playing a double part for his own safety, Napoleon perceived it at once, and let him know that he understood his position, and for that reason was not afraid of him. How are we to account for this clear insight except by a pure love of veracity. It is only that which guides the historian, the philosopher, or the statesman through his work. Penetration is also necessary, but penetration

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is like a telescope which needs a human will behind it to make it of service. Voltaire had also a penetrating mind, but by no means a profound one. Napoleon was, after all, the one solid entity among the Latin races. For the same reason he was universally trusted. The French people clung to him as iron filings are attracted to a magnet.

Napoleon's penetrating look has become historical, — like that of Alexander of Macedon before him. That it became a habit with him, so that he applied it to both men and women in a manner which often seemed uncivil, is not to be denied; but in the confused condition of French affairs after the Revolution, having to deal continually with strange faces, it was the only way in which he could judge of his customer.

The objection may be raised that we are describing an ideal man and not the real Napoleon. This is quite true, but without such an ideal there would never have been any real Napoleon as we know him. The real is the ideal Napoleon as conditioned by external events. It was the ideality in him which gave the supernal beauty to his face and illuminates the history that he made; for otherwise he would have been merely a French officer, as Blücher was a Prussian officer, and never a genius and a world hero. Veracity of fact is always superior to veracity of form. It is not uncommon for people to have, and at the same time disregard, such evidence and testimony as are indispensable for sound judgment and right action. On the other hand, it is impossible to deal with men on a large scale, particularly in

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politics, without some faculty of dissimulation, — enough at least to enable us to conceal our thoughts; and Napoleon developed this faculty to such perfection that the ablest diplomats in Europe were not more than a match for this son of Mars, whose only education had been in the art of war.

There are men and women whose inclinations follow so closely the lines of the universal laws that ordinarily they are not obliged to exercise much self-control. Napoleon was one of these: he did everything he undertook in the very best manner, not as a matter of principle, but as Raphael and Titian painted their pictures. He was not only a great soldier, but a great artist; and this perfect freedom of action endowed him with extraordinary power. He could throw all the energy of his nature, without reservation, into each particular act. This separated him by a wide chasm from the ablest men about him, and caused them to look upon him almost as a supernatural personage. In the end, however, it exaggerated his self-confidence almost to the extent of a religious superstition.

It was much to Napoleon's advantage — as it was to Hamilton's — that he was born on an island, and of a different race from the one with which he was afterwards identified. He had thus an opportunity in the years of formative intelligence of looking at France from an external standpoint, and could see the French people more exactly as they were, and are. Metternich remarked that none of the sovereigns of France had understood the French character, or had known how to deal with it so well as

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Bonaparte. Louis XIV. might say, "I am France;" but Napoleon, in 1809, could have said, "France, I own it." He became more and more of a Frenchman as he advanced in life; but was altogether more like an ancient Roman dropped into the nineteenth century. He was particularly fond as a boy of reading Plutarch's Lives; and it can hardly be doubted that he derived his code of morality from that source, although in the most atheistic stage of the French Revolution he remained a stanch Catholic and celebrated mass privately in his chamber when it was dangerous to do so. One of Madame Bonaparte's friends is reported to have spoken of her taciturn son as "one of Plutarch's men."

No man can escape altogether from the influence of early surroundings. Modern Italians are well known to be rather tricky, and Corsica has also been noted for its smugglers and even pirates. We sometimes trace the germ of this moral dereliction in Napoleon's method of dealing. He had not more of the lion in his composition than he had of the fox. He won his most decisive battles by tactical tricks which no one had ever thought of before; and his practice of carrying off valuable works of art from conquered cities, in order to give lustre to his administration, reminds one of those plundering Roman generals whom even the ancients could not justify. Occasionally we perceive an element in him as if the pure brightness of his intellect was momentarily shut out by a cloud. The larger the diamond the more liable it is to some imperfection.

It is necessary to distinguish, however, between the

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virtues of a retired life, in which there is always leisure to reflect upon the consequences of our conduct, and the life of those who act under continual pressure, and are obliged to decide almost instantaneously on matters of the highest importance. To judge Napoleon by the same standard as Wordsworth, or Emerson, would be an absurdity of logic. It would be hardly just to compare him with Wellington or General Sherman.

We should always remember the element into which he was plunged — so young and inexperienced. France in the time of Henry IV. was the centre of civilization; but it had become a civilization rotten at the core. Its condition during the eighteenth century has become proverbial, but Spain, Italy, and Portugal were even more demoralized. In all the Latin races vice was rampant and virtue persecuted; but the vigorous struggle in France between Huguenots and Catholics had helped to preserve the intellectual energy of the French race. Although Protestantism had been crushed out as a popular creed, intellectual freedom continued to survive in the skepticism of Voltaire and the encyclopædists, while political indifference tolerated theories of government of the most revolutionary character. There were high-minded men in both Spain and Italy, but they lived only to suffer. They were isolated instances, and in neither country was there sufficient vitality left to enact a revolution. When religion becomes separated from morality — and it was just this condition which Martin Luther rebelled against — civilization has to decline and will continue to do

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so, until some great physical shock brings the world to its senses, and causes it to realize its true condition.

At that time it may fairly be stated that Prussia and some other portions of Germany, with Sweden, Denmark, Hungary, Scotland, and the eastern coast of North America were the only nations in a healthy moral condition, — the only countries where the commandments of Moses were respected, and obeyed to any considerable degree. England was in a midway condition between Scotland and France. The body politic of Europe evidently required a surgeon, and Nature, not wishing her favorite race to go to ruin, provided one at the right moment.

We read of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire, without realizing that a similar course of events has taken place in recent times. There is now a united Italy, and Spain has again obtained a constitutional government, but the Italy of Michael Angelo and the Spain of Cervantes exist no longer. Those nations have gone down as Rome went down before them, and their present influence on the course of civilization is little or nothing. France, Germany, and Great Britain are full of intellectual energy, and each has had its complement of great men during the present century. Italy has had two or three, and Spain even less. Italian soldiers fought bravely under Garibaldi, but were everywhere defeated by the Austrians in 1866, from a lack of competent commanders; and the same incompetency was conspicuously apparent in the late contest between Spain and the United States. Men of superior character and nobility are to a nation what lighthouses are to the seacoast.

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It is a saddening investigation to trace the degradation of Italian art and architecture from the pure, refined taste of the fifteenth century, and the noble magnificence of the sixteenth, through various transitions of demoralization and reaction, until the series finally ends in the middle of the eighteenth century with what might be called a stony grin of horror. In the immediate vicinity of the ducal palace at Venice, there is a head carved on the base of a tower dedicated to St. Mary the Beautiful, which Ruskin thus describes: "A head, — huge, inhuman, and monstrous, — leering in bestial degradation, too foul to be either pictured or described, or to be gazed at for more than an instant: yet let it be endured for that instant; for in that head is embodied the type of the evil spirit to which Venice was abandoned in the fourth period of her decline."

Similar monstrosities are to be met with in Rome and other Italian cities, and the funereal monuments in the churches, of that period; and if not so indecent are equally frivolous and distasteful. What more fitting prognostic could there be of a great social upheaval. The concluding lines of Byron's tragedy of "Marino Faliero" repeat the same evidence, — a picture of social conditions which we shudder to contemplate. When Napoleon arrived before Venice with his army, a feeble revolution took place in his favor within the city; so feeble that it might be compared to the impotent struggles of a paralytic, but it served to indicate the popular impulse of the time. Napoleon made an end of the decrepit old republic, and almost immediately its inhabitants doubled in

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number. It was like a surgeon lancing an ulcer. His disposing of the city afterwards to the Austrians as a makeweight in the negotiations for peace is not so creditable to him, but it is not likely that he would have done this if it had been avoidable.

It has been supposed that Spanish dominion was the ruin of Italy; but cities like Milan and Florence that were under foreign government were more flourishing, and preserved a better morale than Venice and Rome. After the revolution came the virtuous, weak sentimentality of Canova and the Italian opera, and in France the mild, negative conservatism of Chateaubriand. The world had begun to realize its wickedness, and was making a laudable but not very earnest effort to behave itself again.

Previous to Napoleon, the whole continent of Europe was covered with an iron network of institutions derived from the feudal system, which were as unsuitable to modern modes and customs as the armor of the Black Prince would have been for General Grant. The human race was not only spiritually miserable, but its limbs were fettered.

Society in the feudal system was like an army in winter cantonments. Warfare, though not so deadly nor carried on so extensively as at present, was almost perpetual, so that subordination and military discipline prevailed everywhere. Now, an officer in an army can strike a soldier, and, if he does it without sufficient cause, the latter has a chance of redress by applying to his superior officer; but if a private soldier strikes an officer, the latter has a right to shoot him. This is necessary for military subordination;

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but apply it to civil affairs and what a condition of things you will have. Voltaire was beaten by a French lord as any slave might have been; but when he attempted to obtain redress he was imprisoned for several months to cure his insolence. Even in England a hundred years ago there was no law which could compel a nobleman to pay debts contracted to merchants or professional men. The revolutions of the seventeenth century had mitigated the evil largely in Great Britain; as did the law reforms of Frederick in Prussia, and the reforms of Joseph II. in Austria. It was accordingly these three nations which formed the barrier against the extension of French influence under Napoleon.

Heroes do not always appear when they are needed, nor do they fit exactly the places which are assigned to them. There are periods in history in which human affairs seem to be given over to the sport of circumstances, and a blind, deaf fate mocks all efforts to discover a rational sequence of events. There are other periods which seem to be in the care of a supernatural guidance; when events take place as if according to a prearranged plan, and great men appear unexpectedly to play their parts in them, as actors come out from behind the scenery of a theatre. Of the former sort, the Italian leagues of the fifteenth century and the thirty years' war in Germany are conspicuous examples: of the latter are the struggle of the American colonies for independence, and the consulate and empire in France. Napoleon's mission in life was to knock the feudal system in the head.

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Julius Cæsar is the only famous man with whom we can compare him. They are the two greatest soldiers in history, and at the same time great lawgivers, writers, and revolutionists. Wendell Phillips said, "Cæsar crossed the Rubicon borne in the arms of a people trodden into the dust by a cruel and rapacious oligarchy;" and the world is generally coming to that opinion. It was exactly the same spirit which animated the soldiers of Napoleon in his two Italian campaigns; but the difference was that in his case the oligarchy was without France instead of within it. All the kings of Europe were banded together in support of hereditary privilege, and this "little corporal" stood forth as the champion of character and virtue. It was Thor again fighting the giants.

Carlyle calls him "the champion of democracy," but that is not likely. As an army officer he would naturally have more confidence in subordination as a political principle than in equal rights. He was, however, the champion of justice, and of equality for all classes before the law. Wherever he went with his battalions he appeared as a political reformer, — a reorganizer in the interest of public morality; and this accounts partly for the marvelous success of his early campaigns. The rank and file of the enemy looked upon him as a liberator, and actually wished for his success. The French fought for a cause, but the Austrians fought because they had no alternative. Napoleon was a hero in Vienna itself, and Beethoven had already dedicated a symphony to him when the news came that he had crowned himself at Fontaine-

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bleau. If Napoleon had died before that event, would he not have been considered one of the noblest heroes of all time?

A government that will endure the storms of history must be rooted like the oak. It must have its beginning far back in the records of the nation, and be endeared to the hearts of the people. It must grow underground, as it were, before it comes to the surface. The federal Constitution of the United States was a natural outcome from the colonial governments which preceded it; and these were derived, with some simple modifications, from the municipal and constitutional governments of England. Such was not the case with the French Directory. It had no historical basis, but was merely a temporary structure raised upon the ruins of the old French monarchy. The people of France were not accustomed to it. It was not suited to their character and they distrusted it. It was vicious and ineffective. Our foreign ambassadors soon discovered what unprincipled men were elected to the Directory. "Mirabeau," said Napoleon, "was a rascal, but a very smart one. There were as great rascals as he on the Directory with me, but they were not half so smart." The mercantile class distrusted the Directory from a lack of faith in its continued existence: the poorer classes distrusted it on account of its impersonal character. A frequent change of rulers has its advantages, but it greatly lessens executive responsibility. A reaction against the Directory was inevitable, and it would have taken place much sooner but for the bad diplomacy of Pitt and the

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Austrian minister, Thugut. The wars that resulted from this diplomacy in fact prevented just what the Austrian and English governments wished to accomplish. But for the brilliant campaigns of Moreau and Napoleon it is highly probable that the Bourbon family would have been reseated on the throne of France before the close of the century. The course of history sometimes depends on a single will.

About the year 1800 two counter-revolutions took place, of opposite tendencies; one in France and the other in the United States. Let us suppose that Napoleon was ambitious to become dictator. The fact makes little difference. It was inevitable that he should become dictator whether he wished it or not. The Romans were the most practical people of antiquity, and none more jealous of absolute power; and they knew well enough what they were doing when in times of public danger they vested the supreme authority in a single person. On Napoleon's return from Egypt he found the government of his country equally bankrupt in money and reputation; commerce was ruined; and the armies of the republic defeated and demoralized. There was hardly more than one opinion: that he was the only man who could save the state in this emergency. The result justified the measure; for no sooner had Napoleon been placed at the head of affairs than his electric energy penetrated to the most distant provinces and into every department of public activity. With incredible quickness the treasury was filled, trade revived, fresh armies equipped, and the right man was everywhere found in his proper place.

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After the victories of Marengo and Hohenlinden, Napoleon was confronted by even greater difficulties. There was a political organization in France, but otherwise the social fabric was everywhere disordered. The early reformers of the Revolution, especially the Girondists, might be compared to the alchemist in Hawthorne's fable who killed his wife in attempting to remove her birthmark. They desired to abolish a debased government, a superannuated religion, intolerable class distinctions, and social disabilities; and for the time being they quite destroyed government, religion, and good society. Alison, a historian more just to Napoleon than some later ones, says of France in 1801, "Not only had the throne been overturned, the nobility exiled, and the landed estates confiscated; but the institutions of religion, law, commerce, and education were almost annihilated. Even the establishments of charity had shared in the general wreck; the monastery no longer dispensed its munificence to the poor, and the doors of the hospitals were closed against the indigent sick and wounded." Napoleon perceived that before he could govern France he must obtain the coöperation of church and school.

There is nothing that a statesman dreads like interfering in questions of religion; and many who have done so have lost their lives in consequence. Napoleon, however, restored Catholicism, which was the only practical course to pursue, at a single stroke. The skepticism of Voltaire had culminated in the nihilism of Paine and the atheism of Robespierre, and a strong reaction had set in. If Napoleon had

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attempted to introduce Protestantism as a national faith, the French people would have become divided into hostile camps, and would have fallen an easy prey to their enemies. As it happened, there was strong opposition in high places to Napoleon's course. Moreau, who was the Pompey of his time, set himself against it, and ungraciously refused to attend the first mass which was celebrated by the new government in Notre Dame. He may have been more enlightened than Napoleon, but he was not so wise — not so patriotic. The true patriot knows by a sense of tact and instinct what is best to be done in such cases.

Napoleon next restored the time-honored names of the months and days of the week, for which revolutionary epithets had been substituted. This he accomplished by a single edict, and thereby won much credit for himself from all parts of the world. He next recalled a hundred and fifty thousand exiles who had been living in England and Germany since 1793, many of them in great destitution. He could not restore their confiscated estates to them, though it cannot be doubted that they deserved a partial indemnity; but he conciliated them as much as possible in other ways. He restored good society by recognizing those informal but sensible distinctions of classes such as we respect in America; and, if his state receptions were not so brilliant as those of Louis XIV., they had at least a superior moral tone. Napoleon's own conversation was delightful; the plain sense and simple grandeur of his ideas captivated everybody; though his methods of preserving

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decorum in the drawing-room, and in his own household, were sometimes too much like those of the camp. When his face grew dark, everybody shivered, not knowing where the lightning would strike; but his reprimands were always well deserved, and on the whole salutary. It was his way of keeping order. His brothers enjoyed a larger share of this than others, yet they do not appear to have been much afraid of him.

We cannot but admire the clearness of judgment, resolution, and decision, by which he effected these radical changes. During the First Consulate, the French government securities nearly trebled in value; and the only question asked was, "How could this prosperity be maintained and made continuous." Napoleon was only thirty-two, and his fame was like that of Alexander. It is stated that when Beethoven heard that Napoleon had obtained for himself the office of life-consul, with power of nominating a successor, he cast the score of his heroic symphony on the floor and allowed it to remain there for some days. Napoleon's usurpation, as it has been called by his enemies, has always been considered by republicans a severe blow to liberal institutions; but if we compare it with Cromwell's treatment of the British Parliament, we find similar underlying causes in both instances. There was the same division of opinion and uncertainty in the councils of the republican leaders in France as that which embarrassed Cromwell so much in managing the affairs of the Puritan party. In both cases there was a strong military pressure behind the usurper; and a strong external

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need of concentration. Subsequent events proved that Cromwell's life could only be safe by pursuing the course he adopted, and we may suspect as much in regard to Napoleon. The repetition of such events in history would seem to indicate that they were unavoidable. No man could have succeeded in elevating himself to Napoleon's position through personal ambition alone. As in Cæsar's case, it was necessary to have a strong political party behind him ; and to this end it was essential that he should assimilate himself to the aims and purposes of his party. Not only the French army wished for the life-consulship, but a large majority of the French people wished it, — as was proved by the vote that was taken in ratification of the change of government. Napoleon must have been gratified by this expression of public confidence, but, like every great constructor, he naturally desired to see the work he had begun carried to its completion ; and this was even of more importance to him than honor.

If at the close of two years Napoleon had resigned the consulship, which was really a dictatorship, and the Directory had again come into power, what would have been the consequences ? What condition would France have been in to withstand the next coalition of England, Austria, and Russia ? Every aristocrat in Europe was determined to crush out the dangerous French innovation. It is not likely that Napoleon would have found a place in the Directory. He had proved his superiority to all of the Frenchmen in public life ; such superiority as is more dangerous to the possessor than to others.

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He might have been exiled or even put to death. If the sole consulship survived, Moreau would probably have been elected in Napoleon's place. In 1800 Napoleon placed Moreau in command of the best army that France possessed, and went to the Marengo campaign with a greatly inferior force. Is it likely that Moreau, who was afterward implicated in the conspiracy of Cadoudal, would have treated Napoleon with equal magnanimity? It is more probable that Moreau would have stood in the way of Napoleon's employment in any position where he might have a chance to distinguish himself. The best evidence of this is, that he afterwards fought against his own country, in the army of the Tsar of Russia, which can only be accounted for on the ground of a deep-seated animosity toward Napoleon.[1]

Perhaps the best excuse for Napoleon's course at that time was the codification of French law in the interest of equality and universal justice. He felt especial interest in this work, which has survived his battles, and embodied the best fruits of the French Revolution. The codification was almost too hastily accomplished, — for it was a work of years, — and could only have been performed under the supervision of a single mind. After the Code Napoléon had been adopted, it was still necessary that it should be sustained in practice until the legal profession should become accustomed to it. Otherwise, a sudden revolution of the most fickle people in Europe might

[1] Napoleon twice treated Moreau with exceptional magnanimity; and Moreau was killed at Dresden in consequence of an order given by Napoleon himself.

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have overturned the whole structure of revolutionary jurisprudence and left it sticking in the mire of reform. The change from life-consul to emperor was little more than a nominal one. Napoleon's power remained the same, but it was surrounded by more formality and court etiquette. He was virtually emperor already, and it was better on many accounts that he should be recognized by the proper title. He was not a man to care for names but for realities. Before he returned from Egypt he wrote to his brother, "At twenty-nine, I am already tired of glory." It is certain that the etiquette of court life was distasteful to him. He repeated this several times, adding that elaborate ceremonies were not becoming to a soldier.

The enlightened government of the future should be a rational republicanism; a republicanism founded not so much on the rights of the individual as on duties to the state; and it would have been well if Napoleon could have resigned his dictatorship, and assisted with his wise head in framing a constitutional government which would have united the best qualities of the Roman, the English, and the American. Such an effort of his genius would be more pleasant to contemplate than the long list of his battles now carved on the *Arc de Triomphe.* This, however, was not to be; educated in the army instead of in the law, his inclination undoubtedly favored a more military form of government. If such a plan crossed his mind, we may suppose that he dismissed it. There is always a tendency to imperialism in democracy, and of this he was ready enough to take

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advantage. It is only in the high tides, or rather in the smooth waters of civilization, that republican governments have proved to be possible; usually in communities favored by their geographical position. Whether such could have succeeded in France at the beginning of the nineteenth century is problematic and could only be proved by experiment. We can thank our isolated position in America for what was accomplished here in 1787; accomplished by the mighty exertions of men trained and educated in English constitutional history. It is safe to conclude that a slight external pressure at that time would have prevented the adoption of our constitution; and, indeed, such adoption was seriously threatened by consideration of the slaveholder's interest. There were in Napoleon's day not less than five political parties in France, and of these the one which corresponded most nearly to our Federalists counted the smallest number of votes. To the confusion of the revolutionary period there had succeeded a confusion of opinions. In the public mind there is always uncertainty and indecision; and the general public naturally turned for help to the man who had a mind of his own, and was never found vacillating. The problem of the hour was whether or no poor human nature was to be crushed again beneath the juggernaut of aristocratic privilege. Napoleon foresaw that this was to be fought out in a long and bloody conflict, and he prepared himself for the coming struggle.

According to the Peace of Amiens, which followed the French victories of Marengo and Hohenlinden,

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Napoleon was to withdraw his forces from Switzerland and Italy; and the British government on its part promised to restore Cape Colony in Africa to Holland and the island of Malta to the Knights of St. John, from whom it had been treacherously pirated. Malta, however, was an important strategic position for the British cruisers, and possession of the Cape of Good Hope secured the maritime highway to India; so that public opinion in England was strongly averse to having the conditions of the treaty carried into effect; although Fox and the Liberals were anxious for peace, and considered that the pledges of the treaty ought to be kept. Having waited a reasonable time, therefore, and finding that the British cabinet had no intention of acting in good faith with him, Napoleon marched his troops back into Switzerland and Piedmont and took possession again. This action was made an excuse at Westminster for the renewal of hostilities; and it was at this time that Napoleon used that celebrated phrase to the English ambassador, "France may be destroyed, but she cannot be intimidated." The true cause of the war lay much deeper. Ever since the time of the Tudors it had been a tradition of English foreign politics that the possession of the Low Countries by a strong power would be dangerous to English independence. Napoleon also recognized this when he said, "Antwerp is a sword pointed at the throat of England;" that is, at the mouth of the Thames. It is true that Napoleon was in no wise responsible for the annexation of Belgium or the French protectorate in Holland, but he would have considered it cowardly, as

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the great mass of the French people would, to have surrendered those conquests. It would have been considered a base desertion of the Dutch and Belgian democrats. The same was true of northern Italy. Even if Napoleon had been willing to return to the ancient boundaries of France for the sake of peace and the balance of power, it is not likely that this would have availed much. In the temper of the French people at that time, excited as they were with a rose-colored enthusiasm of reforming the whole world, it could only have resulted in Napoleon's overthrow, and transferring the reins of government to less capable or less practical hands. Even Napoleon's life would not have been safe under such conditions. He had to go on in the course which destiny had prescribed for him, and was actually safer on the battlefield than he would have been in Paris, if he had pursued the policy which so many historians have since prescribed as the proper course for him. He recognized this himself, and frequently alluded to it; but few of those about him, and still fewer afterwards were able to comprehend what he meant. He was like a man between two fires, and this situation explains the apparent recklessness with which he often acted.

In the coming struggle the French people were not only obliged to contend against the fossilized principles of mediæval Europe, but against the living and highly active principle of the balance of power, and the still more important principle of national independence. Did Napoleon realize the task that was before him? Did he realize that his enemies could

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not conclude a lasting peace so long as Holland and western Germany were practically united to France? No word ever escaped him from which we can infer that he understood this supreme law of modern international politics. Great actors in the world's drama do not look too far ahead or consider too curiously. The practical statesman turns from one object to another, seizing always the one that is most prominent and important. Great events in those times pressed upon one another so rapidly that men acted as it were from instinct, and had hardly time to exercise forethought. The German view of Napoleon is that he was an instrument in the hands of fate, and like Michael Angelo (whose Christ in the Last Judgment resembles him) built better "than he knew." Napoleon's motives may not have been philanthropic; he may have desired the extension of French interests more than the cause of equal rights, and his personal or family interests may have often obscured higher objects in his mind. All we can say is that he pursued a well-defined course in a consistent manner, and should receive credit for doing so.[1]

[1] This and the foregoing statements concerning Napoleon's interference in German affairs are fully supported by the best German historians. Menzel's is, I believe, the only one yet translated into English, and it is not first-rate, but his evidence is the more valuable because he belongs to that class of German writers who have strong anti-Gallic sentiments. He fumes over the French occupation of western Germany, but he admits that Napoleon's government was just, and his reforms highly beneficial. In regard to the war of 1809, he flatly contradicts the statements of English historians who allege that it was forced by Napoleon. He states that it originated in an attempt by the Austrian government to excite an uprising against Napoleon in central Germany, but this only resulted in a few isolated

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When a military genius is born on a throne, or like Cromwell obtains possession of one, the rest of the world may well look out for itself. If Napoleon had been hampered by an Aulic council like that at Vienna, or had been tied to a modern English ministry by submarine cables, he might not have accomplished so very much. It was certainly fortunate for the fame of Nelson and Wellington that they were able to act in as independent a manner as Napoleon himself. He often profited by the mistakes of his adversaries, but it was more frequently the simple grandeur of his ideas that defeated them. He calculated his plans so exactly and carried them out to such minute perfection that if it had not been for the disasters of his Russian expedition, it is difficult to see how he could ever have been overcome; but it might have happened in some other manner, a stray bullet, or perhaps a fall from his horse. The man who ruined him was the unknown person who planned the burning of Moscow. That was a catastrophe which he had never thought of, and from that hour his fall was certain.

His military movements have been criticised of late even by his admirers; but too much, I think, according to the methods of our own time. Napoleon does not appear to me like a gambler in war, as M. Thiers and Mr. Ropes are pleased to call him. Those who have suggested that in the campaign of 1805 he hazarded his communications to an attack in the rear

outbreaks. He considers Napoleon the greatest hero of modern times. See the American edition, pp. 1459, 1471, 1472, 1482, 1492, 1511, 1515.

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from the Prussians, are not so well informed as Napoleon was as to the condition of the Prussian army. A year later Napoleon writes to his brother, "The preparations that Prussia is making for war are ridiculous." In 1805 Prussia was in no condition to interfere with Napoleon.

It is true that he would have been defeated at Marengo but for the fortunate arrival of Desaix, and Kellermann's brilliant charge; but it was Napoleon who secreted Kellermann in the vineyard, and he evidently detached Desaix to march on a parallel road so that he might fall on the enemy's flank as soon as he heard the sound of the cannon. It was an agreement like that between Blücher and Wellington at Waterloo, and equally successful. He took too large risks, perhaps, in his last German campaign, but the result could hardly have been other than it was, and the habit of playing a bold game had become fixed upon him. During his captivity Napoleon often talked the matter over with his companions, but never could see how the campaign might have ended successfully.

Whatever special talent his adversaries possessed, that Napoleon had also. He was in himself equal to all the other generals in Europe. Wellington may have matched him in handling troops on the battlefield; but Wellington added nothing to the art of war, and as a strategist was not even equal to Marmont. He had rare foresight and made a brave defense in Portugal; but he was afraid to face Massena in the open field, and accomplished little in Spain until Napoleon had withdrawn all the forces

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that could be spared from the peninsula. Blücher was as bold and swift as Wellington was slow and cautious; but in other respects the two were much alike. He defeated Napoleon at Laon in 1814, — it is true with a superior army, — and he saved the battle of Leipsic for the allies, as he did afterward at Waterloo.

Next to Napoleon, the model soldier of the time was the Archduke Charles of Austria. His campaign of 1809 was on both sides the most brilliant and bravely fought of the present century. The series of actions from Eckmuhl to Ratisbon, extending over a space of ten miles, was such as only two commanders could perform who perfectly understood each other. The Archduke, though defeated, is admitted to have displayed great military skill; and in the battle of Essling, which followed soon after, he had much the best of the game, although the sudden rising of the Danube prevented reinforcements from reaching the French army. Wagram was one of the most equal conflicts ever fought. There were ninety thousand men on either side, and the level plain of the Mayfield gave no advantage of position to one party or the other. Napoleon was victorious by means of an invention which had never before been thought of, and which I believe has not been used since. He advanced his cannon against the enemy's centre almost like a charge of cavalry, — a movement which could only have succeeded on perfectly level ground.

It is a mistake to suppose that Napoleon was lavish of the lives of his soldiers. On the contrary, he

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was as careful of them as possible. He overran both Austria and Prussia with a loss of something like ten thousand men. The desperate struggles of 1809, 1813, and 1815 caused a frightful loss of life to both sides; but there was no help for it, and strange as it may seem, nobody was to blame for this.

The Italian nationalists who supported Victor Emmanuel and Garibaldi have admitted that Italy was never so well governed before as under Napoleon's viceroy; though particular cities like Florence and Venice had been better governed. The numerous uprisings in Spain and Italy during the Restoration between 1820 and 1848 all had for their object constitutional government and a return to the Code Napoléon. The enlightened princes of southwestern Germany, as well as the Duke of Weimar, adopted the same platform of their own accord. The same influences prevailed even in Portugal after many turns of fortune and an obstinate struggle with the nobles and clergy. Napoleon's conquests were so beneficial that they were even of advantage to countries which he treated most severely. There is no evidence that he wished to make war against Prussia. It was not for his interest to do so. He could fight England, Austria, and Russia together, but he foresaw if Prussia were added to these three powers the struggle might be too much for him.

The Prussians, however, were in a vainglorious state of mind, such as the French were in 1870. The passage of Napoleon's army across an outlying piece of their territory was not a sufficient offense of which to make a *casus belli*. The truth appears

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to have been that they were jealous of French victories and wished for a trial of skill with the great conqueror. Napoleon certainly treated Prussia with great severity, but the chastisement was not without favorable results. It enabled Chancellor Stein to enact the liberation of the serfs, and to settle the land question in a manner greatly to the advantage of the common people. It is supposed that Frederick the Great wished also to make these changes, but was deterred from doing so on account of the opposition of his army officers, who mostly belonged to the nobility. The present vigorous and healthy condition of Prussia is owing in no small measure to the catastrophe of Jena.[1]

Napoleon was also the liberator of Poland, and, in spite of his severe military exactions, his all too brief dominion there was looked upon as an oasis in the long dreary desert of Russian absolutism. His government was not despotic, for everything was done according to law, and the capable Poles who took service under him found their merits appreciated as quickly as if they had been born Frenchmen. The burning of Moscow was a greater misfortune to Poland than the burning of Warsaw would have been.

It appears to have been during the Prussian campaign of 1806 that Napoleon first conceived the idea of obtaining peace by universal dominion. This, however, would have been a positive misfortune to mankind, and it brought him into conflict with two political principles, which he could bend with his

[1] See Professor Seeley's biography of Von Stein.

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superhuman strength, but could not break; so that they finally recoiled against him and cast him from his throne. These were *nationality*, and the *balance of power*.

To quote Hegel again, — and no one is better worth quoting, — "It was against the rock of German nationality that Napoleon shattered himself." He might have added also English and Spanish nationality. It has become a fixed idea in the minds of a majority of men that a people speaking the same language, of a common origin, and common customs, have a right to a government of their own. It is a principle which has been centuries in developing, but has acquired great power. The heart of humanity is in sympathy with it. Consider what it has accomplished since 1820. Belgium has become independent, and so have Servia and Bulgaria. Schleswig and Holstein have been united with Germany, and Germany has become united in itself. The Hungarians have obtained all the independence they require, and Italy has become independent and united. It was more this feeling that caused the independence of the American colonies than any decided misgovernment on the part of England. The only exception to it has been the separation from France of Alsace and Lorraine, whose inhabitants were originally German, but had become Gallic through a long period of French government.

There were two causes which may have prevented Napoleon from recognizing the right of nationality. In the first place, he was without a country of his own. He had adopted France and become identified

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with it; but his father emigrated to Corsica at a time when there was a bitter feeling on the island against the French, and Corsica was not enough of itself to make a fatherland. In the second place, from his early youth until middle life the classes in all adjacent nations were so divided against one another as for the time being almost to suppress the feeling for nationality. As these disputes, however, became finally adjusted, the love of one's own country rose superior to the admiration for French liberalism, and introduced into the affairs of Europe a new element on which the great magician had not sufficiently counted.

Napoleon's enemies have always enumerated among his imaginary crimes the removal of the king of Spain in favor of his brother Joseph. Now, in reality to put an end to such an effeminate, mendacious, and altogether disgraceful race as the line of Spanish sovereigns, from Philip II. downward, was an act of beneficent manliness, for which not only Spain, but all other nations ought to have been thankful. Professor Seeley says: "The administration of Spain had long been in the contemptible hands of Manuel Godoy, supposed to be the queen's lover, yet at the same time high in the favor of King Charles IV. Ferdinand, the heir apparent, headed an opposition; but in character he was not better than the trio he opposed, and he had lately been put under arrest on suspicion of designs upon his father's life." A precious family this, truly, and one better suited to a house of correction than a palace. The overthrow of Nero was not more perfectly deserved, but Napo-

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leon's peremptory method offended the national pride of the Spanish people. They felt that their rights as an independent state had been trampled on; and the classes that would have been chiefly benefited by the change were the foremost to revolt and showed the most bitter opposition to it. Insurrections broke out all over the country, and this lack of *savoir faire* gave Napoleon more trouble and cost him more lives than ten years of warfare with England.

The explanation of his severe treatment of Prussia is simple enough. He said he had "no ill-will against Prussia; but if he could not remain at peace with her it was necessary to crush her." He reduced the Prussian army to twenty thousand men, ruined the commerce of the country, and joined its eastern provinces to the kingdom of Westphalia. He had not counted, however, on Prussian nationality. In 1813 the people rose to a man, and the nobles pawned their jewels for a war contribution. They fought with the same desperation as the French did in '95, and with even more stubbornness. Wherever Napoleon was not present in person his troops were defeated, and for the first time he discovered the difference between a heterogeneous empire and a substantial nationality.

No less important a principle is the balance of power. Without this no country would feel safe from the attacks of its neighbors. It is difficult enough to keep the peace at any time between two or more rival nations, each with its national prejudices, jealousies, and material interests; but without the balance of power peace would be almost impos-

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sible. Witness the hundred years of warfare between England and France in the time of the Plantagenet kings. Such purposeless, indiscriminate fighting would not be permitted at the present day. The chief distinction between the politics of modern Europe and those of the Græco-Roman world consists in this principle. Universal domination means political stagnation, the decline of civilization, and barbarian conquest. The supremacy of France in Europe, even of a French republic, or the supremacy of any single nation, would be an international misfortune. Among a family of nations, though there may be contention and ill feeling, there is also that independence of character and interchange of ideas which give moral good health. We need the Englishman for his manliness, the German for his sincerity and depth of feeling, and the Frenchman for his social virtues. It has been the very capstone of Bismarck's diplomacy that, after having seriously disturbed the balance of power in Europe, he was able to reconstruct it again on a firmer and more rational basis than before.

It is far from pleasant to have to take sides against such a magnificent man as Napoleon; but in the end we are obliged to do this. He carried matters to such an extreme that the minds of all men were in a state of tension, so that they felt they could endure it no longer. Like many another statesman, he was right in the beginning, but wrong at the close of his career. Even his partisans in France felt this. It seemed as if the iron network of feudalism, which Napoleon had shattered, had been forged again into a massive chain, which was twisted about the whole

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of Europe, and was crushing out all freedom of action and cheerful human activity. Carlyle, then a student at Edinburgh, felt it with his keen, artistic sensibility, and described in his old age how people woke up at the fall of Napoleon as if from a hideous nightmare. Napoleon never perceived it himself; he had become too much of a partisan; and perhaps could hardly distinguish his own interests from those of his country. With all his breadth of mind and clear penetration, he never could place himself in the position of his adversaries. I do not suppose any man could do it. He continued to the end fighting the Russians and Prussians and Austrians in his own mind.

The Russian campaign of 1812 was Napoleon's first aggressive movement — if we except his occupation of Spain — and the only one for which he can fairly be blamed. Dr. Ropes brings forward evidence to prove that the Tsar Alexander was meditating war and acting in a manner hostile to his agreement with Napoleon, but it does not seem likely that Alexander would have gone to war of his own accord until he could have obtained the support of Austria and perhaps of Prussia also.[1] Napoleon's ostensible complaint was that the Russian government permitted the importation of English merchandise contrary to Napoleon's embargo. This is probable enough, but it was much for Napoleon's interest that it should have been permitted. Although there had not been since 1805 any direct commercial relations between

[1] Menzel states, however, that the Russian campaign was caused by Alexander's demand for the duchy of Warsaw, and his accumulation of heavy forces on the Polish frontier.

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England and France, an immense smuggling traffic had been carried on by way of Belgium, because Frenchmen wanted their coffee and other tropical products, and Englishmen were equally anxious for a supply of silks and brandy. The traffic that was carried on through Russia between 1810 and 1812 was of a similar character and served to content people on the continent of Europe with the existing political order. Green and other English historians have vainly imagined that Napoleon's object was to humiliate their country; but Napoleon's mind was too practical and his nature too magnanimous for such idle folly. Metternich spoke of it as the *va banque* of a gambler whose head has been turned by unlimited successes. At the same time, when consulted by the Emperor Francis in regard to the probable issue of the campaign, he expressed no doubt that Napoleon would accomplish his object whatever that might be; and it is well that those who look upon it now as a foolhardy enterprise should remember this. I do not know that Napoleon at any time gave an explanation of his reasons for it, but we may gather them from casual observations made at St. Helena. He told Dr. O'Meara, in a discourse on Poniatowski, that he intended to have made him king of Poland. This casts light on the subject at once. If Poland could be reorganized under French protection, perhaps with boundaries more extended than ever before, and with the Code Napoléon and a land reform to satisfy the cravings of the Polish people, it would form a stronghold in the east of Europe, on which the French emperor could always rely for diplomatic support in

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peace and military assistance in war. It would be a breakwater against Russian aggression, and a military post in the rear of Austria and Prussia. Such a government would probably have satisfied the aspirations of the Poles for independence, and would have been a very great advantage to them. This evidently was Napoleon's plan, and if he had succeeded in realizing it, it is difficult to imagine how his enemies could ever have gotten the better of him.[1]

That Napoleon did not anticipate the burning of Moscow is certain. He confessed that he never thought of it; and it was perhaps the only large city in Europe that could have been destroyed in that manner. It was composed chiefly of wooden houses, and the weather of northern Russia is subject to severe northwest winds which blow from three to four days at a time. Such a conflagration could not have happened in Paris or London. The fire engines were of a primitive description, and had all been cut so that even Napoleon's army was unable to stop the conflagration. He described it as the grandest and most terrible sight that he had ever witnessed.

The burning of Moscow was the last desperate resort of the Russian government to drive Napoleon from the country. In this it succeeded, but in the natural order of events it would not have caused serious injury to the French army, nor would it have prevented Napoleon from opening a vigorous campaign on the Polish frontier the following spring; and considering the immense destruction of property,

[1] Menzel gives important evidence on this score, but his own reflections are neither judicious nor impartial. Pp. 1563–1565.

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it was doubtful if the Russian cause would on the whole have been improved by it. It was the premature and unprecedented cold during the French retreat which so nearly destroyed the *grande armée.* The French soldiers left their ranks, and wandered into farmhouses, where they were easily captured by the Russians. "In one night," says Napoleon, "I lost forty thousand horses." After this the cannon had to be left to the enemy, the cavalry was dismounted, and the rear of Napoleon's army was left unprotected. Multitudes were frozen to death, and the wonder is that any escaped to tell the tale. Yet when they reached the Beresina, one of the broadest rivers of Europe, Napoleon was equal to the occasion, and so manœuvred as to deceive the Russian generals, and effect a passage. He still remained equal to himself, but fate was against him. Fortune, which had always favored him thus far, even in the chances of escaping death on so many battlefields, now smiled on him no longer. It was as if the hand of destiny had set a mark beyond which he could not go; and although this included the suffering of millions, perhaps it was best that it should be so. The pendulum of reform and revolution had swung too far, and thirty years of conservatism were needed to counterbalance it. Napoleon had no chance after 1812, but the Russians also suffered so severely that during the following campaign they were able to accomplish little, and but for the assistance of the Prussians must have been driven out of Germany. In 1813 Napoleon won his first three battles, with raw levies scarce twenty years of age.

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His downfall was a most terribly magnificent spectacle. Though he appears so hard-hearted, he really loved his men, and the loss of his army in Russia was like a perpetual bereavement. Still more keenly did he feel the immolation of his old veterans at Waterloo. No wonder he said to Fouché, on his last return to Paris, "Do not tell me to dare; I have dared too much already." What could be more tragical than his last look at France (as we may fancy it), from the deck of the Northumberland! What more pathetic than his memoirs! A voice from St. Helena warning Europe to beware of its two great dangers; the "red cotton night-cap," and the monstrous semi-barbarous power of Russia — two great avalanches ready to descend on civilization. This supreme man of action wasting away on a sultry tropical island! Certainly Cæsar was more fortunate to fall at the base of Pompey's statue.

For a time it seemed as if, after filling the world with confusion for twenty years, he had disappeared and left no result behind him. Europe needed rest in which to recuperate from her wounds, and this could only come through a strong conservative reaction. The despotism of Metternich and the Holy Alliance was more intolerable than the severity of Napoleon, with his sumptuary laws and constant military training; but it was inevitable and had to be endured. It seemed for the time being as if the whole continent would be Russianized; but the spirit of equal rights was irrepressible. First came the revolution at Naples; then in Piedmont, Spain, Portugal, and Greece; and these were suppressed for

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the most part by Metternich and the sentimental Chateaubriand, and many patriots suffered martyrdom; yet a deep fermentation went on in society, and at length the July revolution in Paris changed the whole aspect of affairs in western Europe.

When a ship loaded with cotton happens to take fire it will sometimes burn for days before this is discovered, and for days afterwards, while all attempts to quench the conflagration fail. When the deck begins to smoke and becomes too hot for the sailors to stand on, they take to their boats and escape as they best can. Such was the political situation in Europe between 1820 and 1848; and Metternich was the captain of the vessel. He strove manfully to quench the flames, but at length even conservative Vienna became too hot for him, and he was obliged to retire to the cool shadows of his castle on the Rhine. He was a good man in himself and not without statesmanlike ability, but much too superficial. To his mental vision constitutional government must lead to republicanism, and republicanism to socialism; just as our prohibitionists suppose that drinking wine and beer leads to delirium tremens.

After many vibrations of the political pendulum all Europe except Russia has now adopted the constitutional form, and the Code Napoléon is dominant from Munich to Cadiz, and between Sicily and the Straits of Dover. Napoleon is reported to have said that his laws would be remembered after his victories were forgotten; but they really belonged to one another, and the same principles underlie them both.

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He was not a scrupulous man, and, if he had been, would never have accomplished the work he was given to do. Like all great natures, he troubled himself little as to what his cotemporaries thought of him. He cared more to enact justice in this world than to have justice done him in the next. It is true he was severe, but the times were such as required severity; and I believe there is no instance in which he refused to listen to a suggestion in behalf of a revision of judgment. Metternich says that as a man he was neither moral nor immoral; and this coming from so vigorous an opponent has a good deal of value. Those who have the cares of empires resting on them find little leisure to be good according to the usual methods of humanity. He has suffered somewhat from the stories that Madame Junot and other ladies of his court record of him; and it is better to believe these, and give Napoleon the full benefit of them, than to attempt any excuse for them. They are not charges of a serious nature.

I was long troubled by hearing of Napoleon's crimes until I found an opportunity to examine them; whereupon they all became dissipated like morning mist. They are crimes only from the standpoint of hereditary privilege. His removal of the incapable king of Spain, which has already been commented on, is a typical instance of this. It is true that the negro general Toussaint died in a French prison, but we should be cautious about accepting Miss Martineau's statement that his death was caused by ill treatment. There was no reason why he should have been treated differently from

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other political prisoners, and Miss Martineau's writings are rarely exempt from the influence of the various philanthropies of which she was the champion. When a writer's sense of right and wrong becomes so far perverted as to treat the protection of national industries as a question of morality, there is no reason why we should pay him or her serious consideration. Napoleon's transportation of the Jacobin leaders to Guiana was a relief to French politics, and a tardy act of justice for the horrors of the Revolution, which could not have been obtained in any other manner. The perfection of government would only seem to be attained when there is a power above the law to rectify and amend its deficiencies.

Madame De Staël was banished for her impertinence; if it be not called downright impudence. A woman is never so intolerable as when she imagines herself to be an important political factor. Madame De Staël permitted herself to become a puppet for Napoleon's enemies, and no matter how powerful a chief magistrate may be he cannot afford to have men or women treat him with disrespect. There was great rejoicing among sensible people in Paris at her departure; as there was also in the duchy of Weimar when she returned to her villa on the lake of Geneva. Her exile was no great hardship, and but for its long continuance might even be esteemed a blessing. The French people as a rule know too little about other countries, and her travels in Germany, Italy, and England broadened her mind and improved the quality of her writing.

Napoleon's nearest approach to crime, and the

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most futile of his undertakings, was his divorce from Josephine. That, at least, was an offense against society. Yet it was not a crime, for many other men have done the same without being regarded as criminals. On his return from Egypt there was some trouble between them, but they were reconciled by the mediation of Hortense and Eugene. Again, when he became emperor he is reported to have had a severe struggle over the right of succession; for Josephine wished to have her own son take precedence of Napoleon's brothers. This statement does not come from very good authority, and may be incorrect. If the truth were known, it would probably appear that the divorce originated more from Napoleon's desire to have children of his own than from a wish to become allied to the house of Austria. There are many husbands who can sympathize with such a feeling.

The cardinal sin of Napoleon's life, however, the one his enemies lay the severest stress on, was the supposed murder of the Duc d'Enghien. There never was a much clearer case of accessory before the act than is found in the conduct of the duke. At the same time that Captain Wright landed Cadoudal and his accomplices on the French coast, the Duc d'Enghien went to the duchy of Baden and stationed himself close to the French border. The duke was a fool to suppose he could make such a move on the chessboard without attracting Napoleon's attention. Its coincidence with the arrival of a number of mysterious persons in Paris was also noticed. Spies were at once set upon the duke's movements, and it was discovered that he made nocturnal excursions into

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French territory. He might have been arrested and condemned for this; but Napoleon waited until all the fish had been gathered into his net. It is not certainly known that the duke corresponded with Pichegru and Cadoudal; but no sane person doubts that he was acquainted with their movements. The British government might profess indifference as to the methods by which the conspirators intended to overthrow Napoleon's government; but the same excuse will not answer for the Duc d'Enghien. If an honest man is caught among thieves he suffers the penalty of his folly. It was the duke's business to have known the plans of the conspirators. He was court-martialed and executed as the associates of Wilkes Booth were court-martialed and executed for the murder of Lincoln. The assassination of a chief magistrate is the most hideous of all crimes, and the slightest effort towards it ought to be punished with death.[1]

The massacre of his Turkish prisoners by Napoleon, in Syria, was atrocious enough, but the act was decided upon by a council of war, which Kléber, Junot, and other generals of high character attended. They had no provisions wherewith to feed the prisoners, and, if released, they would have rejoined the forces of the enemy. Christian prisoners might have been paroled, but for Turks that would have been a useless and ridiculous ceremony. They were

[1] Every one should read Napoleon's own account of this conspiracy (veracious on the very face of it) in the *Voice from St. Helena*, vol. i. p. 290, which I did not see myself until after this statement was written. The English also consider the execution of Major André a crime of the same sort.

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treated as if their parole had already been broken; but it was a bad situation of affairs.

The only act which appears to have caused him remorse was breaking the ice at Austerlitz. The cries of the drowning Russians haunted him. It was hardly worse than exploding the powder magazine of a frigate with hot shot would have been. There is no other instance like it in the history of warfare on land. Frederick or Marlborough might have done the same.

Napoleon's civil administration is fairly exemplified by his treatment of the Jews. When questioned at St. Helena as to his reason for this liberality, he replied, "I wanted to make them leave off usury and become like other men. There were a great many Jews in the countries I reigned over; by removing their disabilities, and by putting them on an equality with Catholics, Protestants, and others, I hoped to make them become good citizens, and conduct themselves like others of the community. I believe that I should have succeeded in the end. My reasoning with them was — as their rabbins explained to them — that they ought not to practice usury to their own tribes, but were allowed to do so with Christians and others; that, therefore, as I had restored them to all their privileges, and made them equal to my other subjects, they must consider me to be the head of their nation, like Solomon or Herod, and my subjects like brethren of a tribe similar to theirs; that, consequently, they were not permitted to practice usury with me or them, but to treat us as if we were of the tribe of Judah; that having similar privileges to my

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other subjects, they were in like manner to pay taxes and submit to the laws of conscription and others. By this I gained many soldiers. Besides, I should have drawn great wealth to France, as the Jews are very numerous, and would have flocked to a country where they enjoyed such superior privileges. Moreover, I wanted to establish a universal liberty of conscience. My system was to have no predominant religion, but to allow perfect liberty of conscience and of thought, to make all men equal, whether Protestants, Catholics, Mahometans, Deists, or others; so that their religion should have no influence in getting them employment under government." It will be remembered that Julius Cæsar also wished to alleviate the condition of the Jews.

What a man is this! What lofty thought and noble statesmanship, expressed in sentences as chaste and fragrant as rose petals! It is the doctrine of Christ transferred into practical politics. There is nothing like it in Bacon or Locke or Macaulay. Just an hour before reading it I was perusing the Phædo of Plato, and it was not easy to believe that I had changed from one writer to another. This powder-scorched man, with the marble temperament, had a most beautiful human soul within him. Such a man must either be an autocrat or nothing; for where could he find others whom he might take counsel with on equal terms? If he had not risen to power his whole life would have been an exile.

Napoleon's bulletins are not so exaggerated as his enemies would have you believe; and yet they do not represent him fairly. They were written to suit the

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taste of the French people, who, in spite of their realistic art and literature, had so long been separated from reality that the simple truth would no longer satisfy them. He must have smiled as he wrote them. In his letters to Joseph and in his conversations at St. Helena we come close to the man himself. The clearness of his thought and force of his ideas are emphasized by the unpretending directness of his style. It is like taking Manitou iron water to read him. He infuses energy into every nerve. If he had devoted himself to literature he would have been the greatest of French writers, as he is now one of the best. He never composed any plays, but he knew human nature better than Molière, and his sentiment was purer than Voltaire's or Racine's. He liked Eugene Beauharnais as a youth, because he wept at the sight of his father's sword.

Napoleon disciplined the whole of Europe, and filled it with heroes. He aroused people from their slovenly, mechanical ways, and instructed them to act with energy and precision; he woke them up from their drowsy, self-complacent lucubrations and set them to thinking in earnest. Wherever he went all idlers, parasites, vicious and dissipated persons were sent about their business. He disliked the monks because they lived in idleness, which he considered the root of all evil. We are indebted to Napoleon, not only for such grand characters as Ney, Victor, Murat, Junot, and Soult, but Wellington, Blücher, Canning, and Von Stein owe their places in history to him.

Nor can it be doubted that he exercised an influence on great artists. It has been noticed that the

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best poetry of Schiller, Goethe, Byron, and Wordsworth was written between 1795 and 1810. Beethoven also intended at first to dedicate his heroic symphony to Napoleon. When we admire them we admire Napoleon also. A man, however, who tries to change, remodel, and transform everything must in the end set all the world against him.

What comprehensive wisdom in his last directions to the child whom he had not seen for so many years: "My son shall reign a mighty monarch. He shall do good works and not attempt to avenge my death. To win great battles would be but to ape me."

This did not come true of his son, but of his nephew; and if Napoleon III. had paid more strict attention to it he might not have died an exile in England.

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THE WATERLOO CAMPAIGN

HUNDREDS of writers have treated this subject heretofore, and yet something always remains to be said of it. It still continues fresh and interesting. If nothing more, I can at least expose some of the errors and misstatements of my predecessors. This is not an enviable task, but it is a useful one.

The Waterloo campaign is the most interesting one of modern times, for its problematic character, the fearful loss of life occasioned by it, and a certain dramatic quality, like the fifth act of a tragedy, which reached its climax in the consignment of Napoleon to St. Helena.

The political importance of the campaign has often been estimated too highly. It was the battle of Leipsic in 1813 that broke the power of Napoleon; and after that he had nothing more than a ghost of a chance so long as Austria, Prussia, and Russia remained united against him. That they would have remained so is proved by the fact that their alliance continued for more than thirty years longer without any other object apparently than to preserve the peace and prevent democratic revolutions. Those who, like Byron, look upon Napoleon as a homicide and butcher of mankind cannot be aware that after his return from Elba he offered the allies peace dur-

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ing his own and son's lifetime, and that they were even disposed to consider these terms. Nothing but the terror of Napoleon's genius can excuse the great powers for declining his proposals; and it seems a shame that the man who proved himself foremost in the art of war should not have been permitted to show what he could also do in the arts of peace. But it is only on grand occasions that history accomplishes the best results; and the lives of forty thousand men were sacrificed within three days, in order to maintain the principle of hereditary right in politics.

No one knew better than Napoleon the desperate errand on which he went. Even if he had succeeded in driving Wellington into the sea and pushing Blücher across the Rhine, there was little chance that he could sustain himself against the forces that would afterward have been brought against him. Only a continuation of miraculous successes could have saved him, and his fate was practically decided before the battle of Waterloo was half finished.

It has been said that his army in this campaign was one of the best he ever commanded; but this is hardly a fair statement. The rank and file of his troops was largely composed of veterans, but his best generals, with the exception of Ney and Soult, were gone. Masséna was an invalid, Junot and Lannes were dead, Murat was in Italy, and Victor declined to serve. Dr. Ropes thinks Napoleon made a mistake in stationing Davoust at Paris, but it was essential to have a reliable man in command at the seat of government, and we should be cautious in judging

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such matters in the light of subsequent events. To have replaced Grouchy with Masséna and D'Erlon with Victor might have made a great difference in the result of the campaign. In addition to this, an American student who was residing in Paris during the hundred days, and in his old age wrote an account of it for "The Atlantic Monthly," noticed that the French cavalry were not well mounted. This followed as a matter of course from the immense destruction of horses during the retreat from Moscow, and gave the English cavalry, charging down the slope of Mont St. Jean, an easy superiority.

The Duke of Wellington was of opinion that Napoleon would have succeeded better if he had invaded Belgium by other lines than those of the Meuse and Sambre; and he certainly could not have succeeded worse unless he and his whole army had been captured. If it does not appear that his chances might have been much improved by pursuing a different course, if he had followed the line of the Scheldt and attacked Wellington on the extreme right, he might have cut the English from their base of supplies, but at the same time would have been outflanked strategically by Blücher, a general who would not have been slow to take advantage of the situation. If, on the contrary, Napoleon had marched against Blücher's left wing, he would thus have thrown the allies together, and have been obliged to fight very much such a battle as General Beauregard did at Shiloh. Prince Blücher's biographer blamed Wellington for declining to prearrange a point of junction in case of Napoleon's advance; and Wellington replied to this

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that such an attempt would probably have led to a false position, than which nothing could be more unfortunate for the allied cause. It would be interesting to hear this question discussed by an impartial expert in military affairs.

A statement by Napoleon's surgeon at St. Helena may have misled some writers in regard to his plan of this campaign. He is reported to have said that if his subordinates had acted with as much energy as they did sometimes, Wellington's army would have been captured in cantonments before he had a chance to strike a blow. This, however, throws more light on Napoleon's manner of talking than on the subject before us. Napoleon no doubt felt pretty sore over this defeat. For Marshal Ney, with forty thousand men, to capture the Duke of Wellington with twice that number of troops at his disposal, was such a dream as no sane person would imagine.

Napoleon's plan was one which he had invented himself in his first Italian campaign. It was very well known, and Blücher evidently expected from first to last that Napoleon would act exactly as he did. Wellington, on the other hand, seems to have looked for some new invention.

Napoleon directed his first attack against Blücher, because the Prussian army was stationed nearer to the French frontier than Wellington's, and because he knew that Blücher was always ready for a fight. He directed Ney to press forward on the road to Brussels and hold Wellington in check, while he dealt with Blücher himself. Having defeated Blücher, he would transfer the bulk of his army to unite with Ney and fight Wellington.

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Marshal Ney performed his part of the programme in a satisfactory manner. It is thought that if he had attacked Wellington at once at Quatre Bras he might have defeated him; but what could Ney have gained by this? If he had defeated the small force opposed to him and pursued it, he would have run the risk of being overpowered by a superior force coming to its support, while he would be widening the distance between himself and his own reinforcements. That the whole body of Ney's troops was not present at the battle was owing to a request which Napoleon sent to him for assistance, which was delivered to one of his subordinates. Wellington remained on the defensive until the close of the day, when, having been heavily reinforced, he ordered a forward movement, and Ney's army retired from the field in good order. Wellington, with a force numerically superior to his adversary, gained no advantage except the possession of the ground.

Meanwhile, "Old Forwards" was carrying on with Napoleon one of the toughest struggles of the times. General Hambley avers that Napoleon directed his first attack against Blücher because the French were accustomed to defeating the Prussians. Such an opinion by a writer on military affairs! The plain fact is that the French have never defeated the Prussians except when commanded by Napoleon, and at Davoust's battle of Auerstädt. Blücher defeated them repeatedly in 1813, and in 1814 he defeated Napoleon himself at Laon, though it is true with some advantages on his side.

The Prussian army consisted of soldiers of two

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years' service, and only three years' training. Blücher's cavalry may have been superior to Napoleon's, but he had no body of trained veterans like the Old Guard or Wellington's Highlanders. He was obliged to concentrate at or near Ligny on the best ground he could find, and the position was not a strong one. Otherwise he must have retreated on the road to Liège and have been hopelessly separated from Wellington. Blücher's Prussian biographer complained that Wellington did not come to the assistance of the Prussians, but it is doubtful if Blücher ever complained of it. His army was larger than any force that Napoleon would be able to bring against him, and why should he require assistance?[1]

The battle of Ligny in its general character resembled Wagram. Blücher, like the Archduke Charles, attempted to turn Napoleon's left wing; but at the very moment when he seemed likely to succeed, Napoleon, by a sudden attack of the Guards, captured the village of Ligny and compelled him to retreat. Gustavus Adolphus gained the battle of Britenfeld by similar tactics. If Blücher had merely stood on the defensive, which it was all that was necessary to do to block Napoleon's game, this might not have happened. Every nation has its style in war; and there are no soldiers like the French for fighting in a street or storming a fortified position. Blücher does not appear to have realized this. He charged at the captured position at the head of his cavalry,

[1] The story that Wellington examined Blücher's ground and disapproved of it, contradicts itself, for it represents Wellington speaking as if he had seen Blücher's army in position, which it was quite impossible for him to have done.

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but his horse was killed by the fragment of a bomb-shell and the attack was repulsed. The Prussians retreated in good order, and Napoleon appears to have captured few guns and not many prisoners except those who were wounded. The loss of the French was about twelve thousand killed and wounded; that of the Prussians from twelve to fifteen thousand.[1]

An incident occurred during this battle which proves how narrow the line often is between success and failure. Napoleon sent a request to Marshal Ney for a body of eight or ten thousand men (if he could possibly spare them) to attack the Prussians on the right wing. If this request could have been complied with, Ligny would have been a Waterloo for Blücher; a large portion of his left wing must inevitably have been captured and his army compelled to evacuate Belgium altogether. The request was delivered to a general of division who was on the road to Quatre Bras, and who undertook to fulfill it on his own responsibility. He and his forces were already within sight of the Prussians when the contrary order reached him to retrace his steps. Marshal d'Erlon is credited with having prevented this stroke of genius, which otherwise might have changed the current of French history.

The next forenoon Grouchy was sent in pursuit of the Prussians with about thirty thousand men. According to Thiers, Grouchy was a political appoint-

[1] Dr. Ropes places the Prussian loss on French authority at eighteen or twenty thousand. German writers are much more trustworthy on such points, however, than the French: witness the report of the Prussian staff for the war of 1870 and 1871.

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ment, — the sort that has often occasioned mischief in military affairs. He belonged to the old noblesse whom Napoleon was desirous to conciliate; was a brave soldier and formerly commanded the Old Guard. Napoleon, however, was obliged to choose between Grouchy, Vandamme, and Gérard. The position was one of great delicacy and required a skillful and experienced general. In 1809, after the battle of Eckmühl, Napoleon dispatched Masséna in pursuit of the Austrians, while he himself took the road to Vienna.

Grouchy did not at all like the commission that was given him. He was no doubt very much afraid of Blücher, and with good reason. Blücher had an available force of forty thousand more than he himself commanded, and his own troops had suffered but little less than the Prussians on the preceding day. What was there to prevent Blücher from turning on him and overpowering him; Blücher was originally a cavalry general, and possessed all the dash and rapidity of action which belongs to that branch of the service. The fact that on the afternoon of June 18 Grouchy was obliged to fight a battle with General Teilemann shows that if Blücher had not gone to Wellington's assistance Grouchy would have been obliged at that time to encounter the whole Prussian force; and the destruction of Grouchy's command would have been almost as severe a blow to Napoleon as Waterloo itself.

In the vindication of his conduct, which he published on his return from exile, Marshal Grouchy says of his last interview with the emperor: —

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I replied to him, that the Prussians had commenced their retreat at ten o'clock the evening before; that much time must elapse before my troops, who were scattered over the plain, were cleaning their guns and making their soup, and were not expecting to be called upon to march that day, could be put in movement; that the enemy had seventeen or eighteen hours' start of the troops sent in pursuit; that although the reports of the cavalry gave no definite information as to the direction of the retreat of the mass of the Prussian army, it was apparently on Namur that they were retiring; and that thus, in following them, I should find myself isolated, separated from him, and out of range of his movements.

"These observations," Marshal Grouchy states, "were not well received; the emperor repeated his orders, adding that it was for me to discover the route taken by Marshal Blücher." [1]

Grouchy's objections are valid enough, but unfortunately there was nothing else to be done. The wonder is that Napoleon, finding that Grouchy did not like the business, should not have superseded him at once. Vandamme was an experienced officer, and might have understood the situation better. Soult in such an undertaking might have won great renown, but Napoleon retained Soult not only for his knowledge of Wellington's tactics, but as the best person to take command of the army in case of accident to himself.

At Gembloux, seven or eight miles from Ligny, the highway divides going north and east. Grouchy apparently spent the 17th of June in discovering which direction Blücher had taken. Now any one

[1] *The Campaign at Waterloo*, J. C. Ropes, p. 207.

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who examines the positions of the four armies on the morning of June 18 will perceive that Napoleon was in a trap. Blücher was at Wavre, which is about fourteen miles from the field of Waterloo; whereas Grouchy was fully eighteen miles from Wavre, and twenty miles distant from Napoleon, who probably delayed opening the battle on that account.

At half past eleven Grouchy had reached Walheim, only six miles north of Gembloux, where he was greeted with the sound of Napoleon's cannon at Mont St. Jean, and as is well known was urged by Vandamme and Gérard to go to his support. If Grouchy did not know where he was and what he was doing, this was clearly his best line of action, though Blücher still had the inside track and could have reached the field of battle nearly an hour before Grouchy could. Yet in this case we ought to consider not only what actually happened but what might have happened. If Wellington's army had been defeated by three o'clock in the afternoon, Grouchy's assistance would not have been required, and he would have found himself awkwardly situated with regard to Blücher. He would seem to have been more culpable for the slowness of his movements than for erroneous judgment. Why Blücher delayed so long to reinforce Wellington has not yet been explained. One Prussian army corps arrived on the field about five P. M., and seriously embarrassed Napoleon's movements; but it was more than two hours later when the main force of the Prussians attacked the right wing of the French army.

The material of Wellington's force was not nearly

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so good as Blücher's. Only two fifths of the troops drawn up to oppose Napoleon at Mont St. Jean were British soldiers, of which nearly a third were volunteers; one fifth was made up of Hanoverians and Brunswick Prussians; and the remainder were Dutch and Belgians.[1] Wellington's Highlanders, however, may be counted equal to Napoleon's Old Guard, and he had also a very effective cavalry force. Napoleon, of course, was aware of the constitution of his opponent's army and probably expected to defeat it quite easily.

The emperor alleges in his memoirs that he sent an order to Grouchy on the evening of the seventeenth requesting him to come to his assistance on the following day if he could possibly do so without Blücher's knowing it. The truth of this has been doubted, and Grouchy has denied ever receiving such a dispatch. It is possible that Napoleon intended to send such an order, that he neglected to send it, and afterwards supposed that he had sent it; but it is quite as possible that being sent to Wavre it fell into the hands of the Prussians, or that Grouchy being at Gembloux, Napoleon's orderly did not succeed in finding him until late in the following afternoon. Thiers states that a Polish officer was intrusted with this dispatch, and that he never afterwards was heard from.

Marshal Marmont, in his report on the battle of

[1] This is General Hambley; but Mr. J. C. Ropes says about twenty-four thousand British, twenty thousand Germans, and twenty-three thousand Dutch and Belgian troops. English battles have always been fought largely by soldiers of other nations.

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Salamanca, notices that Wellington had a faculty for selecting strong positions, and his position at Mont St. Jean was no doubt the strongest he ever occupied.[1] The farm of Hougomont and the village of La Haye Sainte were like two castles in front of his line, which protected it from any immediate attack on the right and centre, while his second line was posted in comparative security behind the crest of the ridge. Yet Wellington did not anticipate Napoleon's attack on his left wing, and stationed his weakest troops there.

He thus came very near being defeated at the outset. According to the statement of his biographer, Rev. George Robert Gleig, the Dutch and Belgian troops all ran away, leaving only three or four thousand English soldiers to contend with a column of twelve or fifteen thousand French. General Pictou, who was in command, gave the order to advance, and was instantly killed by a musket ball. If this had happened before the order was given, it seems likely that in the confusion that ensues at the death of a commanding officer, the French attack would have succeeded.

Marshal D'Erlon has been censured by all Napoleon's sympathizers for the formation of the column with which he made this attack. There can be no doubt that it was not properly supported by cavalry; but why did not Napoleon superintend such an important movement himself? A Prussian *corps d'armée* had already been observed on the heights of St.

[1] It was at Mont St. Jean the battle took place. Waterloo is more than a mile on the road to Brussels.

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Lambert before the order for attack was given. Napoleon ought to have realized the deadly peril in which he and his army were placed. If Junot or Victor had organized the movement, who can doubt but that it would have succeeded? Why did not Napoleon support it with Kellermann's cavalry division and six or seven battalions of the middle guard? He might have concentrated two fifths of his force on that single point without danger to the rest of his line, or if he had advanced his right wing in line for a determined conflict, who can doubt that numbers and discipline combined would have carried the day?

Napoleon's capture of La Haye Sainte two hours later was a decided advantage, and gave him a second opportunity to win the battle. This, however, was neutralized by the attack of the Prussian corps shortly afterward on the right flank of the French. From this time forward Wellington had the advantage of numbers, and Napoleon's army was in such a position that nothing but the blunders of his opponents could save it from defeat. Napoleon was obliged to withdraw troops from his centre to protect his right wing, and thus weakened it too much for a vigorous offensive movement. There were now more German than English troops on the battlefield.

The failure of Ney's cavalry charges points directly to the statements already made in regard to the weakness of Napoleon's cavalry. Not a single square of the enemy was broken by them, whereas in 1870 the Berlin Guards rode down the French ranks at Gravelotte in spite of the rapid firing of the infantry. The

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Dutch regiments on Wellington's centre suffered most severely, but succeeded in preserving their formation.

Dr. Ropes is the first writer in English who has given a clear and satisfactory account of the close of the battle. According to Thiers, the Guards made their attack in column about the time of the arrival of Blücher, when the French line broke behind them and they were left at the mercy of Wellington's cannon, and refusing to surrender were immolated on the field. This is melodramatic enough, but in order to believe it we must suppose that Napoleon delayed a final attack until the Prussian regiments had begun to deploy on his right; which is the same as supposing that Napoleon had suddenly lost his senses.

Dr. Ropes's account is supported by the statement of a Captain Powell, who fought against Napoleon's Guard in the Highlanders. It was not the Old Guard but the Middle Guard which was defeated, and Captain Powell attributes it to the sudden apparition of the Highlanders (who had been lying on the ground) and the deadly volley that they poured into the advancing column. This unexpected collision was caused by the volume of smoke which rolled between the two armies, and as the Highlanders had orders to fire while the Guard had orders to reserve their fire, the latter were taken at a disadvantage from which they did not recover.

Captain Powell's testimony is valuable here. He states that the Highlanders pursued the Middle Guard for nearly a quarter of a mile, until finding themselves outflanked by the advance of Napoleon's

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Old Guard they retired again to their former position.

The Old Guard was itself outflanked in turn by a British division coming up from Hougomont, and finding itself caught in a trap wisely withdrew without serious loss.

Wellington's cavalry charge, by which he had recovered La Haye Sainte, appears to have been contemporary with Blücher's attack on the French right.

I believe no authentic statement of the English loss at Waterloo has ever been made public. Thiers places Napoleon's loss at about thirty thousand killed and wounded; the English at about the same; and the Prussians at eight or ten thousand. This is nothing but national vanity. The British loss is generally admitted to have been over twenty thousand, but that it should be equal to that of the French in such a conflict is incredible. The Prussian loss may have been between three and five thousand, but certainly not more.

Wellington's management of the battle after Napoleon's first attack has never been found fault with. His subordinates also were everywhere equal to the occasion. As a defensive action, however, it was not so remarkable as Napoleon's second day at Leipsic, when with an army composed largely of French boys he preserved an unbroken line against a force nearly twice as large as his own.

What Napoleon evidently did not reckon on in this campaign was the strategy of Blücher. He supposed after the battle of Ligny that Blücher would retreat

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on Namur or Liège, and he misled Grouchy somewhat by suggesting this. If he had foreseen Blücher's action, he would certainly have taken greater precautions against it.

We could admire Wellington more perfectly if he had never pointed to the playground at Eton and said, "There Waterloo was won." Napoleon would not have plumed himself on such a victory. He does not appear to have plumed himself on any of his exploits. The fame of forty victories was no comfort to him at St. Helena. The man was too great for that.

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GOETHE IN PRACTICAL POLITICS.

GOETHE himself has said that the faults of great men seem exaggerated as well as their virtues; and if we apply this principle to his own case, it ought to remove much of the odium which rests on his name. Some of the accusations which have been brought against him are undoubtedly just; but it is equally certain that others have originated either in party prejudice or from the jealousy of his literary contemporaries. He is certainly to blame for his desertion of Frederika, and probably for other flirtations, — though such behavior does not always seem to militate against a man's character. Goethe's love affairs, though by no means to his credit, were of quite a different sort from the immorality of Byron, Burns, and Heine. The accusation, however, that he was a selfish aristocrat, unpatriotic, insensible to the sufferings of the poor, and opposed to the popular and reformatory movements of his time, is untrue and unjust, and can easily be disproved. That he was an aristocrat cannot be doubted; but so was Walter Scott, for they were both brought up and educated at a period when aristocracy was considered the natural order of society.

Of all classes of people, none would seem to be so unfitted — from their tenderness of feeling, their pictorial habit of mind, and their sensitive temperament

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— for practical politics, as poets and artists; and they have generally recognized this themselves. Emerson says, —

> If I leave my study for their politique,
> Which at the best is trick,
> The angry muse puts confusion in my brain.

There is scarcely a reflection in Shakespeare of the religious and physical struggle in which he was born and brought up; and though Milton accepted a position in Cromwell's government, it proved more to his own disadvantage after the restoration of the Stuarts than for the benefit of his country. The angry muse likewise drove Dante into banishment for joining the party of the Ghibellines.

Yet there are occasions of public exigency when it is the duty of every man, whatever his calling, to devote himself unreservedly to the welfare of the state. No one was more ready than Goethe to admit the truth of this, but the opportunity to prove his patriotism never came to him.

He was born in a community more free than any city in the United States, for there was neither state nor national authority above it; but, as often happens in small independent communities, public opinion was so tyrannical there that Goethe was glad to escape from it, even to the conventional atmosphere of the Weimar court. No person, he says, was permitted to be conspicuous in Frankfort, either for good or for evil; but Goethe could not help being conspicuous, any more than Arthur Plantagenet could help being the son of Geoffrey. At Weimar Goethe was advanced from one position in the duke's service to another,

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until at last he became minister of state, and was the confidential adviser of his patron all through the Napoleonic wars.

How was he to conduct himself in such a position? How do the members of presidents' cabinets conduct themselves? Are they not as reticent as possible in regard to all matters which are immediately under discussion? They give an opinion, perhaps, in order to avoid the appearance of secrecy, but they guard themselves carefully against anything which might compromise the administration. So anything which Goethe might have said, any political opinion he might have uttered, would at once be attributed to the grand duke, and pass current over the whole of Europe. Under these circumstances, he had no resource but absolute reticence; and for this plain and self-evident reason almost nothing is known of his opinions concerning the important events of his time. It is one of the most common and stupid of blunders to suppose that a silent man is an apathetic one.

Weimar is a small duchy, lying between two kingdoms; but so great is the veneration of Germans for hereditary right that its boundaries have always been respected. There was no such feeling in Napoleon's composition; he abrogated the charters of free cities, and exiled many German princes from their dominions. There was danger during his conflict with Prussia that Weimar would be forcibly annexed to one side or the other on the ground of military necessity. The only resource in such times for a state without any military force was to be as cautiously neutral as possible. That was the part which the

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grand duke and Goethe were obliged to act, not only for their own benefit, but for that of their people; and they would seem to have played it to perfection.

Napoleon passed through Weimar in 1806 without molesting man or property. He sent for Goethe to take dinner with him; and then for the first and only time either of them met his equal. They were more alike perhaps than is generally supposed, — one the apostle of liberalism (after a fashion) in politics, the other in intellectual life; Goethe was also a conqueror. The accusation that he behaved in a servile manner toward Napoleon is too grotesque to be considered for a moment. The emperor said to his marshals after the poet had withdrawn from the table, "There is a man for you."

Goethe possessed the rare faculty of seeing both sides of a question. It is a faculty which belongs by good right to the dramatic poet, for it is only the dramatic habit that will cultivate it. He was both liberal and conservative. He says in one of his brief proverbial poems, "Hold fast to the old, but ever with open hand welcome the new." He has been blamed by his countrymen for his partiality toward Napoleon, which was supposed to be the result of personal admiration. There is quite as good reason for believing that he had an equal sympathy with the reforms which Napoleon enacted in Germany, Italy, and Spain. Even the socialists admit that Napoleon conferred great benefits on Western Germany. Could the impartial Goethe be oblivious to what was taking place in the states adjacent to Weimar?

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Liberalism does not mean the same in Germany that it does in the United States. Its aim is not a republic, but rather a monarchical democracy like that in England. In the revolution of 1848 the German republicans were almost all socialists. In Goethe's time liberalism meant the abolition of class privileges, the right of voting taxes and armaments by elective assemblies, and freedom of the press. In 1813 many of the German liberals, like the enthusiastic Heine, took sides with Napoleon; but a larger number joined the Prussians on the ground of nationality, being desirous to free themselves from French domination. It is known that Goethe's son was at that time an ardent Napoleonist, and that Goethe himself discouraged recruiting for the Prussian army in Weimar. Surely the man who could predict an earthquake in Sicily was able to foresee the tremendous conservative reaction which would immediately follow Napoleon's downfall; but Goethe's liberalism is not a matter of inference or conjecture.

Less than one year after the battle of Waterloo, first of all the German princes, the Duke Carl August of Weimar granted his people a constitutional government which admitted freedom of the press, the right of franchise for all citizens, and the right of voting taxes. Can any one suppose this was done in opposition to Goethe's advice? We know the characters of the two men. Both were reserved; but Goethe was kindly, conciliatory, and always ready to listen to the opinions of others, while the duke was naturally haughty, self-willed, and autocratic. It is thus

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that Goethe represented him in the character of Thoas.

Unfortunately, the Holy Alliance set its iron jack-boot on this incipient growth of liberalism, and crushed it out. Carl August was notified by the great powers that he must abandon the position he had assumed, and no choice but obedience was left him. With the spasmodic outbreaks which followed during the next ten years, in various parts of Germany, Goethe had little sympathy, for it was easy to see that they aggravated the trouble instead of helping it : he knew them to be as imprudent as they were hopeless, and when they culminated in the foolish assassination of Kotzebue (which is supposed to have prevented the adoption of a liberal constitution in Prussia) there was nothing he could do but avert his face in sorrow. Goethe always preferred temperate measures and a gradual progress in reform to sharp and violent revolutions ; but if he had been a conservative in the usual meaning of the word, he would have belonged to the party of Wellington and Metternich, and would never have been reproached with partiality for Napoleon. On the occasion of the small rebellion of the students at Jena, he said that the students were right, but that the grand duke was also right and must be obeyed.

I would compare Goethe in this respect with no less a person than President Lincoln. What do we honor Lincoln for so much as for his proclamation of freedom for the slaves ? And yet the politicians who nominated him at Chicago hardly knew whether they were voting for an anti-slavery candidate or not.

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They knew only that they were voting for a man they could trust. Horace Greeley declined to vote for him because Lincoln had not distinctly committed himself on the slavery question. In his campaign against Douglas he opposed in a vigorous and decided manner the extension of slavery in the territories, especially when the attempt was made to force it on the people, as the government was doing in Kansas; but in his Cooper Institute address he deprecated all legislation which might interfere with slavery where it was already established. Does any one doubt that Lincoln was at heart an anti-slavery man? The anti-slavery cause was part of the great humanitarian movement of the nineteenth century; and a man who was so magnanimous and compassionate as Lincoln must certainly have felt this. He believed that the cause could be promoted better by his silence than by anything he could say. He waited his time until he should be able to deal with the evil in a more effective manner than by words; and the logic of events justified him.

Such an opportunity never came to Goethe; but we read in "Wilhelm Meister's Indenture of Apprenticeship," "They who see the half of a matter are apt to talk and say a great deal about it; but he who sees the whole of it feels inclined to act, and speaks late or not at all." A wise sentence, and of universal application.

Goethe did not, like Schiller, idealize the common people, but he always treated them in his writings with respect, and strove to represent the good that is in them as well as their peculiarities. There are

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many instances of this, but especially the scene of Easter Sunday in the first part of "Faust." "Hermann and Dorothea" is a pastoral of humble life that never has been matched. If the common people had not been interesting to Goethe he could not have written it. When a lady of rank complained that the characters in "Wilhelm Meister" did not belong to good society, Goethe replied in a verse:

"I have sometimes been in society called good, from which I could not obtain an idea for the smallest poem."

There is substantial proof in Eckermann's Conversations, and in other records, that Goethe maintained a lively interest in public affairs till the time of his death.

In the fearful cyclones on the coast of Asia which occur during the changing of the monsoons, there is a central space where the storm does not rage. So in the little duchy of Weimar, while the wars of Napoleon were raging all around, there was calmness and peace like that of the mighty intellect which has made it famous. It was the intellectual centre of Europe.

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THE POLITICS OF THE *DIVINA COMMEDIA*

WE are not accustomed to think of T. W. Parsons as one of the foremost American poets, and yet in his translation from Dante, he has done the world a literary service second to none of them. There have been many translations hitherto of the great Italian epic, in English prose and verse, but Parsons's is the only one that combines the essential qualities of the original; its ease and grace of movement, its earnest tone and delicacy of expression. Before reading Parsons's translation I had given up hope of enjoying any translation of Dante, except, perhaps, John Carlyle's prose-poetic version of the *Inferno*. Carey made the fatal mistake of attempting to render him into English blank verse; and Longfellow had already acquired a style too far removed from that of the *Divina Commedia*. The lack of any very definite style as a poet may have been to Mr. Parsons's advantage as a translator.

No other modern language possesses equal advantages with the Italian for the formation of smooth-flowing verse; and the secret of Dante's graceful measure resides chiefly in the cadence of his feminine rhymes, which fall over from one line to another like the spray of a fountain. This effect might have been reproduced in Spenser's time, but doubtfully, in the present contracted state of the English language.

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Parsons very wisely did not attempt to reproduce it, — though he has done so in places under favorable conditions; but he has preserved the alternate rhymes of Dante's verse, which continue without a break to the end of each canto. He has thus secured a sense of movement, which, if it does not possess the noiseless gliding of Dante's spirits, nevertheless carries the reader along in a pleasant and unconstrained manner. In this we recognize its advantage over English blank verse, which is much better suited to the argument of the stage. Although Parsons's lines are commonly a syllable shorter than Dante's, he has rendered the first thirty-five verses of the *Inferno* into twenty-eight English verses.

Considering the difficulty of the work, the translation is remarkably smooth and well sustained. That it should be always equal to itself is more than we have the right to expect. Parsons's account of the revenge of Ugolino is one of his most fortunate passages, while he has treated the pure and simple story of Francesca's love with a circumlocution that requires too much for the imagination. That the *Purgatorio* remains unfinished is more to be regretted than that Parsons should not have attempted more than a few detached passages of the *Paradiso*. In his exile Dante was no longer equal to a description of true happiness.

This rare book, however, needs to be published with explanatory notes. Dante appears to have had glimpses of his own literary immortality, and yet no other poet has written so distinctly and determinedly for his own time and people. He is perhaps so much

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the better for this; but whether he is a better poet for his extensive scholarship may be considered doubtful. What the true poet needs, is not scholarship but a manifold experience, and it must be admitted that the scholarly character of Dante's work makes it more difficult for us to comprehend.

To realize the full meaning and intention of the *Divina Commedia*, it is necessary to acquire some familiarity with the tenets of mediæval Christianity, to possess a college graduate's knowledge of Greek mythology, and to be acquainted with the course of Italian politics during the thirteenth century. There is as little true philosophy in his epic as in Homer's Iliad. It indicates an author of wide observation and profound experience, but the scholastic metaphysics with which he has impeded the movement of his *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso* may well be left to the initiated. Dante was not a thinker like Abelard, but a poet *par excellence*.

Of these requisites the last has been the least understood, even by Dante's most ardent admirers. His interference in politics has been looked upon as the great mistake of his life. It has been said that he placed his enemies in hell and his friends in purgatory. It has been looked upon as a natural piece of vindictiveness that he should have placed his arch-enemy, Boniface VIII., in the third circle of *Malebolge*.

Without entering too far into this branch of the subject, we may quote the following sentence from one of the latest of his commentators: —

"It is, however, not easy to decide what the prin-

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ciple is upon which he made his selection: some have thought that it was personal, and that he allowed himself to be guided throughout by motives of personal liking or hatred."[1]

Suspicion is the child of ignorance and bad judgment. Sound minds recognize one another; and if there had not been a deep abiding sense of justice in Dante, he would never have become a world poet. All human beings are swayed more or less by personal feeling, but a close examination of Dante's judgments proves that he was neither partial to his friends, nor unfairly invidious to his enemies and political opponents. The principle he evidently acted upon was that a person who had committed one cardinal sin, like the simony of Clement V. or Jason's desertion of Hypsipyle, ought to be condemned to hell, no matter how virtuous he might be otherwise. He has placed a number of Ghibelines in the *Inferno*, with his instructor Brunetto Latini and his friend Jacopo Rusticucci. Manfred is placed in purgatory, to show that in spite of excommunication he is on the way to paradise.

Guelph and Ghibeline are still ominous words. They represent the struggle between church and state in the middle ages, which raged so fiercely in Germany and Italy that other European nations were comparatively neglected by the priesthood; and the reason for this was that it was a struggle also for national independence against national unity. Italy could have no central authority of its own, so long as the pope held possession of Rome. He could not be

[1] Scartazzini's Companion to Dante, trans. p. 429.

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pope and king also; and this fact created a demand for some supreme authority from the outside, which might constitute a final court of appeal for the difficulties arising between the different states; and although the papal government disliked this, it was considered preferable to an Italian monarchy. The pope and the emperor were like a married couple who can neither live together nor live apart.

A nation without a central government can only maintain its independence so long as external circumstances favor this. Pope Adrian I. was obliged to call in Charlemagne to protect him against the Lombards; and John XII. offered the imperial dignity to Otho I. on condition that he would depose the usurper Berengarius. The attacks of the Saracens on southern Italy, which once placed Rome itself in serious danger, were a perpetual annoyance, and both Germans and Normans were called upon to suppress them. The Italian people were perfectly capable of defending themselves, but they lacked military organization, and it was not for the interest of the papal government that they should acquire this; and the gratitude of the popes to their deliverers gradually cooled after the danger was over.

The terms Guelph and Ghibeline only originated when the masterly Waiblingen family came to the German throne, but the same parties existed before their time and long afterward. The Guelphs were the patriotic party who wished Italy to become independent; and the Ghibelines were the party of law and order, who preferred paying a foreign tax to having continual rows with their neighbors. As a mat-

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ter of course the large cities like Milan, Genoa, Florence, and Bologna were Guelphic; and the smaller states, such as Verona, Padua, Arezzo, Cremona, and Pisa, who were greatly afraid of their more powerful neighbors, were Ghibeline. Naturally, in the more powerful cities the opposition was Ghibeline, and in the smaller ones it was Guelph. In Florence the Neri were Guelph and the Bianchi Ghibeline, or allied with them. In Florence the Ghibeline party acquired the ascendency in 1260; for which event one of its streets was named the Via Ghiabellina.

There is always a conflict external or internal in the nation, the city, or the individual; but the manner in which we conduct ourselves in the struggle is more important than the object or occasion of it. The occasion is a variable, but our conduct is a function of our lives. There was much useless bloodshed in the Guelph and Ghibeline wars, as there was in other countries during the middle ages, but in spite of this Italy prospered, improved, and became wealthy. There were varying successors on both sides; but the three powerful Hohenstaufen monarchs, Frederick I., Henry VI., and Frederick II., coming in succession gave a preponderating advantage to the Ghibeline cause, and reduced the temporal authority of the pope almost to a nutshell.

This was particularly the case during the reign of Frederick II., a ruler who united in himself the talents of Louis XIV. and Frederick the Great, without the weaknesses of either, — one of the most complete men of whom there is any record. At the age of eighteen he crossed the Alps in disguise (for the Swiss were

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hostile to him) in order to take possession of an empire which not only included modern Germany, but Austria proper, Bohemia, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Lombardy, and the kingdom of Naples. For thirty-eight years he governed this vast domain as if by magic. He was terrible in war, but too wise to attempt conquests which he did not believe could be retained. He carried the sword in his left hand and the olive-branch in his right. He suppressed a rebellion of the Lombards with Napoleon-like rapidity and thoroughness; but when obliged to go on a crusade in order to nullify the excommunication of the pope, he made peace with Carmel the Great, the successor of Saladin, and obtained from him larger concessions for the city of Jerusalem than previous crusaders had won by hard fighting. He founded a university, chartered free cities, and enacted laws to ameliorate the condition of the peasantry. Dr. Francis Lieber speaks of him as a man centuries in advance of his own age; and Menzel says that the "lustre of his seven crowns was far surpassed by his intellectual gifts and graces."

Against such a sovereign the pope had no weapons, spiritual or temporal, that were of any avail, — Frederick's son once captured the whole college of cardinals on their way from Avignon to Rome, — so the conclave of the Vatican came to the wicked determination to assassinate the whole Hohenstaufen family.[1] Frederick's favorite son Enzio, was captured by the

[1] We regret to find a strict moralist like John Stuart Mill defending this course on the ground of necessity. The same reasoning would exculpate the murderers of Cavendish and Burke.

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Guelphs at Bologna and put to death contrary to knightly customs and the right of belligerents. Frederick himself narrowly escaped poisoning, and died soon afterward in his fifty-seventh year. His son Conrad IV., and Conrad's brother Henry, were both poisoned by the priests. His last son, Manfred, was killed in battle, fighting against the Duke of Anjou, whom the pope had called into Italy for the purpose.[1] His beautiful wife died in prison, and his young children, brought up in ignorance, became beggars in the streets. Three years later Conrad V., who came to avenge Manfred's death, was beheaded at Naples. So ended the Hohenstaufens; and in the history of the Church of Rome there is not a more hideous crime.

When base methods are resorted to it commonly indicates a desperate condition of affairs. After the destruction of the noble Waiblingen family, the pope and his cardinals found they had only changed a German for a French master; for the evil was inherent in the political situation. The execution of Conrad was avenged, as Carlyle says, by "Sicilian Vespers," in which the French were massacred, not only to a man, but to a woman. Pope Celestine was "induced to resign," by Charles of Anjou; and his successor, the infamous Boniface, was so maltreated by Philip the Fair that he died in the fourth year of Dante's exile. Such a course of events could only serve to strengthen the Ghibelines in Italy. Many important Guelphs went over to them from the fear of a sacerdotal despotism, and among these was the poet Dante. The succeeding pope, Clement V., favored the Ghibelines.

[1] In 1265, the same year that Dante was born.

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Such was the background upon which the *Divina Commedia* was written. In his youth, Dante was a soldier, and had fought against the Ghibelines at Campaldino. He next became a politician, but his poetic sense of justice and devoted patriotism brought him into conflict with greater forces than those which he could wield. If it had not been for his exile we might never have read his poetry.

It must be confessed that his scheme of morals is rather academic. According to modern standards, it would have been more just to have represented Frederick II. in purgatory, and Boniface VIII. in the lowest hell; for in cold-blooded villainy Boniface was never surpassed by any other pope, unless it were Alexander Borgia. We find Frederick assigned to the circle of arch-heretics — which was simply taking his enemies' accusations for truth. It is evident that he was excommunicated for purely political reasons, and that his severe edicts against heresy were intended to counteract this. Dante may have known less about him than the historian Hallam did. *The real heretic is he who refuses to believe the truth when it is placed before his eyes;* and Frederick was too enlightened to feel implicit faith in the superstitious dogmas of his time.

Why Dante should have placed his friends, Tegghiaio Aldobrandi and Jacopo Rusticucci, in the *Inferno* is not so clear; it was probably for reasons known only to contemporaries: so also of his preceptor Brunetto, — but they were evidently excellent men or Dante would not have found pleasure in recognizing them.

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A still more pedantic instance of injustice is that of Pietro della Vigne, in canto xiii., 55, who is incarcerated in the trunk of a tree for having committed suicide. He had been minister of state to Frederick II., but was blinded and imprisoned on suspicion of having attempted to poison his master. Dante considered him innocent of this accusation, but nevertheless consigned him to hell for taking his own life in prison. Contrariwise he exculpates Cato, who was the most pedantic of suicides.

Dante's essay in praise of monarchy is readily explained. He recognized the need of a national government for Italy, and monarchy was the only form of centralization that he could understand. The time for federalism had not yet arrived.

He was not the greatest of poets. He may have excelled Milton; but he is surpassed by Homer, Shakespeare, and Goethe, — perhaps also by Sophocles and Æschylus. Yet, we return to him continually, and we are not depressed by the terrible scenes which he conjures up for us; for they appear in an atmosphere of the tenderest pity, and the light which illumines them comes from the life eternal. The *Divina Commedia* is one of the watch-towers which mark the progress of civilization, and, like Homer's Iliad, it may still hold its place after the *lingua Toscana* has ceased to be spoken.

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MACHIAVELLI'S "PRINCE."

MACHIAVELLI is one of the puzzles of mediæval history. When some notable person who has always appeared immaculate to the public eye, one who has been long distinguished for the performance of pious works and the utterance of patriotic sentiments, is discovered conniving at fraud, or caught in the perpetration of some criminal act himself, we are greatly shocked, it is true, but not altogether surprised; for we know that such instances have not been uncommon before, that self-interest is an ever ready instructor of hypocrisy, and, if we are sufficiently honest with ourselves, we realize how near at times the tempter has been to each one of us. When, however, we read of a man upon whose personal character there was never a stain, and who devoted his life to the service of his native city, who endured torture without complaint, and died in poverty without reproach; and yet one who in his writings advocated the most cruel, cold-blooded, and atrocious principles,—of such a one what judgment are we to make? What are we to think of a statesman who advises us that "men must be either flattered or crushed; for they will revenge themselves for small injuries, but ~~for heavy ones~~ they cannot?" Such a piece of truculent cynicism leaves Diogenes and his tub centuries behind.

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"The Prince" differs in this respect from the "History of Florence." The latter work may, in the portion of it which comes closely to the author's own life, represent partisan and prejudiced views, but this can only be proved by a painstaking investigation of the subject. Otherwise the spirit that animates it would seem to be that pure love of exposition, which George Eliot has noticed as one of Machiavelli's distinctive traits. After a recent perusal I do not recollect a single passage in it which might be called cynical or even sarcastic, and the satire which we may occasionally meet with in it is of a most amiable and refreshing kind. Nowhere does he descend in manner or material from the dignity which belongs to historical composition, except in the fifth chapter of the eighth book, where he evidently makes game of Roberto da Rimini. He is always the friend of municipal independence, the only form of civil liberty possible in Italy during the Middle Ages, and always the admirer of healthy, vigorous political action, whether by princes or popular governments. In the conduct of affairs he considers sagacity the highest virtue and incapability the worst of evils.

This it is not difficult to perceive, though his usual style is one of judicial indifference. He never palliates the crimes of princes, nor excuses the sloth, negligence, and presumption which have often accompanied the inheritance of titles and high offices. Visionary schemes of restoring an ideal past are to such a practical mind as Machiavelli's of all things the most abhorrent. Yet he speaks kindly of Stefano Poreari, who attempted to revolutionize Rome, after

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the fashion of Garibaldi and Mazzini, but was betrayed and put to death by the pope in 1452. "Though some may applaud his intentions," Machiavelli says, "yet he is accountable for a deficiency of understanding; for such attempts, although they may appear glorious, are almost sure to be attended with ruin." In the same narrative he refers to the dissolute manners of the priesthood and the mischief which they occasioned among both nobles and commons. If he favors one form of government more than another, it is that spontaneous Periclean authority, conferred upon the Medici by the citizens of Florence from the time of Cosmo the Great to the unworthy son of Lorenzo, with whom it came unhappily to an end.[1] It is a marvelous thing when a whole people with one accord intrust the best man among them with sole charge of their public affairs. It is something better than either democracy or monarchy, for it is the harmonious union of both. When the life of Lorenzo de' Medici was in danger from the conspiracy of Sixtus Fourth and the Pazzi, every Florentine citizen of any importance whatever, says Machiavelli, waited upon him with the offer of their life and property in his defense. The interests of Florence and of the Medici would seem to have been identical.

Macaulay, to whom much speaking gave readiness, but writing not much exactness, states as a "notorious" fact "that Machiavelli was, through life, a zealous republican;" but this is saying a great deal too much. The only support I can find for it is the internal evidence of the History, and the fact that he

[1] This was also Aristotle's opinion. *Politics*, iii. 13.

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was imprisoned and tortured by the Medici in 1513 on suspicion of being concerned in a conspiracy against them. The truth of this accusation will never be known, for no confession could be extorted from him; but the fact that the conspiracy was formed only within a year after the dedication of his book to Lorenzo the younger, would, to those who place any faith in human nature, make it appear improbable. Nor is it likely that Machiavelli would give a decided opinion in favor of the republican form of government. He was a trained diplomat, nursed in the school of the Borgias, and ready to serve the state, whichever party happened to be in power. As a diplomat, he would certainly be prudent enough to preserve silence on so dangerous a subject. In truth, this appears to have been a pretty bold guess on Macaulay's part; for in his commentaries on Livy, Machiavelli, after discussing the nature and special advantages in each case of the monarchical, aristocratic, and democratic forms of government, and explaining in the clearest manner how each has a peculiar weakness inherent in itself which has always led finally to its corruption and debasement, concludes at length that the most stable, efficient, and just government will ultimately prove to be that which shall combine these three forms in nearly equal proportions. The German philosopher Hegel was of a similar opinion. According to him government ought to be composed of the *one*, the *few*, and the *many;* who, each with well-defined powers, should mutually support and restrict one another. If the *one* should exceed his legitimate authority and attempt to become

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autocratic, the *few* and the *many* would combine to prevent this; and so with each in turn. Now it happens that this is very much the sort of government by which an united Italy is now being regenerated; and it is a pity that Machiavelli should not know it; but if he has gone to the place which most of his critics have assigned to him, it is not likely that he does.

"The Prince" was written about ten years previous to the "History of Florence," and perhaps represents a different phase of the author's life. He does not attempt in it to found a system of political science, but only to discuss such problems as relate to the government of absolute monarchies and autocratic principalities. Of republican governments he has already treated in his essay on Livy. As a matter of fact, he does not concern himself with the affairs of large kingdoms, like France or England, but with the formation of the small dukedoms which were then being established in Italy. He does indeed contemplate the construction of a large central power, sufficiently strong to resist foreign invasion, but this is rather of the nature of a speculative afterthought. It is evidently the government of Florence he is thinking of. The scope of his treatise is narrow, and its details are petty; broad, general views of political science do not enter into it. The suppression of crime, the advancement of learning, the extension of trade, the amelioration of poverty, are subjects about which Machiavelli concerns himself very little. Political economy, which now in its arrogance threatens to cover our whole mental horizon, was then unknown.

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The commerce of Italy was unbounded, and but for the frequent and devastating wars between the different states, its prosperity would have been as great as that of the United States of America is now. The magnificent buildings erected in Italy during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries surpass those of any other country. The great Cosmo provided for the material interests of Tuscany upon the same principles that he conducted the affairs of the Medici bank, and with equal success. No: the main argument of "The Prince" is how to acquire political authority, and then how to maintain it; the latter being a problem which it was constantly becoming more difficult to solve. When we consider the book from this point of view, and that it was written for the benefit of a youthful autocrat, upon whose caprices and immature judgment the welfare of Florence must inevitably depend, we have at least obtained a basis from which to judge fairly of its merits and defects. This Macaulay, who commences with the assumption that its doctrines were intended for "the fundamental axioms of all political science," was quite unable to do.

There is much of the tone of a preceptor running through the book. It is altogether too shrewd and knowing in its style, and perhaps that is one reason why it was not received by Lorenzo with more favor. Otherwise it must be confessed that he gives his intended pupil a good deal of sound and excellent advice. In the first place, a prince, he says, should not give himself up to a life of idle and luxurious enjoyment of his authority, not to speak of wasting

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himself and his substance in dissipation; but should make a specialty of those pursuits which invigorate the body and strengthen the mind. "A prince whose conduct is light, inconstant, pusillanimous, irresolute, and effeminate, is sure to be despised: these defects he ought to shun as he would so many rocks, and endeavor to display a character for courage, gravity, energy, and magnificence in all his actions." He should avoid committing any action which might tend to make him despicable or odious: and "nothing is so likely to render a prince odious, as the violation of the right of property and a disregard for the honor of married women." Even in those cases where he may be obliged to inflict the punishment of death, he should invariably proclaim the reason for it, so that his subjects may not feel that they are in danger of their lives from the caprices of a cruel tyrant. In regard to the confiscation of property, and attainder of blood for high treason, he has anticipated a plank in our own constitution. He shrewdly observes that people sooner forget the loss of their relatives than the loss of their property. (An angelic looking Chicago girl of ten years, when instructed concerning the Southern rebellion, said finally, "I should think it would be better for the South to have lost more men and less money.") But nothing infuriates men like the dishonor of their wives: a glance through history shows a number of monarchs who have upset themselves in this way. "A prince should earnestly endeavor to gain the reputation of kindness, clemency, piety, justice, and fidelity to his engagements." At the same time he should not carry these virtues so

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far as to seriously prejudice his own interests, and those of the state, — a plain truth which every prudent business man is aware of. It is more important that a prince should be feared than loved by his subjects; but he should also cultivate their affections as far as may be consistent with the preservation of his dignity; and in misfortune he should rely on their good-will towards him, rather than foreign alliances which are likely at any moment to prove unstable. He should let his subjects know that he places confidence in them, and rather take some personal risk than show an unreasonable distrust of them. "Neither should he lend too ready an ear to terrifying tales which may be told him; but should temper his mercy with prudence, in such a manner that too much confidence may not put him off his guard, nor causeless jealousies make him insupportable." He should practise economy in times of prosperity and peace, in order to provide a full treasury for wars and adversity; and should care little for being accounted parsimonious, since munificent expenditures must finally result in an increase of taxes and short-lived popularity. Above all things, however, the prince should give consideration to the military art, and make himself in every way an accomplished soldier, so that he may lead his own army and defend himself and his people in person; for thus would he be the more respected by them, and would have to depend no longer upon the treacherous *condottiero* of that time. Machiavelli condemns the use of mercenary troops, and lays down the principle, with emphasis, that it is safer for a sovereign to instruct his people in the use of

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arms than to purposely keep them in ignorance thereof. Here the sun fairly shines through the clouds as he says, "There is no better fortress for a prince than the affection of his people. If he is hated by his subjects all other fortresses will be in vain, for when they fly to arms there will be no want of enemies without the walls to afford them assistance." Parliaments, "whose object is to watch over the security of the government and the liberties of the people," he considers among the wisest of institutions. The effect of these sage counsels on the reader is somewhat diminished by their being presented in the guise of self-interest rather than for any inherent value of their own; yet they show what honest thought the man was capable of. Acting upon such precepts, the Hohenzollern family have risen to the highest position in Europe; while from a contrary practice the Stuarts and Bourbons have gone down to nothing, or next to nothing.

We in America have had very slight experience of monarchical government, and yet it is easy for us to see that the foregoing principles neither militate against humanity nor good sense; but there are also other passages in "The Prince" of a widely different character. It is these which give the book its peculiar tone, and have obtained for it a celebrity much beyond that of better works on political science. They have proved to be hard problems for the stoutest intellects. Not only do they seem to be inhuman and atrocious, but they are also uttered in a manner so easy and graceful as to add greatly to their effectiveness. Their perfect coldness makes us shiver, and in their

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keen precision we seem to feel the blade of the headsman's axe. They impress us in a few words like the last scene of Othello, or an account of the Lisbon earthquake. Lord Bacon shook his head over them and doubted if they were meant seriously. Frederick II. accepted it all in dead earnest, as he did everything, and while he was crown prince wrote a refutation of their doctrines. Carlyle calls "The Prince," "Machiavelli's little absurdity of a book."

He begins by dividing principalities into two classes; those which are inherited and those which may be acquired by conquest or revolution. To govern the former is not difficult, since the people, being accustomed to obedience, will make no objection to the wishes of their prince unless he becomes extremely unreasonable. In the latter, it is true, more care and judgment are required; but "if the family of the prince who last ruled over it be extirpated," and the people are allowed to retain their ancient customs and manners, there need be little fear of insurrection or civil disturbance. If, however, a subjugated city or state has once revolted, it is best to destroy it, and colonize it with citizens from one's own country. "The Romans, to make sure of Capua, Carthage, and Numantia, destroyed them and did not lose them; aud they were compelled at last to destroy several cities in Greece, in order to retain the country; and doubtless that was the safest way, for otherwise whoever becomes master of a free state and does not destroy it, may expect to be ruined by it himself." Napoleon III., however, in his "Life of Cæsar," deplores the destruction of Carthage, and gives the true

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cause for it, namely, that nations, like individuals, sometimes lose their mental balance. Then, after speaking of a prince's behavior towards his own people, he says, "In short, it is always necessary to live with the same people; but a prince has no occasion to continue the same set of nobles, whom he can at pleasure disgrace or honor, elevate or destroy." Cæsar Borgia, having conquered the Romagna, proceeded to root out the old nobility of that province; "and there were few that escaped him." He believes that a prince is no longer obliged to keep his faith or engagements with others when it has ceased to be his interest to do so, or when the conditions upon which his promises were given shall have materially changed. "I should be cautious," he says, "in inculcating such a precept if all men were good; but as the generality of mankind are wicked, and ever ready to break their agreements, a prince should not pique himself in keeping his more scrupulously, especially as it is always easy to justify a breach of faith on his part." These translated extracts and paraphrases, however, do not convey the same dramatic effect as the original do, separated from their natural surroundings. There are not many of them, and I think that the one which I first quoted, that "men should either be flattered or crushed," rather takes the lead of the rest.

How then are we to account for this surprising contradiction? Does it consist in the nature of the man, or the nature of his subject, or in the nature of his times? Was it intentional or accidental? Had Machiavelli a hidden purpose in giving his work an appearance of heartless indifference to humanity,

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an aristocratic air of *sang froid:* or was he quite unconscious of the sensation that it would produce? Had the man a perverted moral vision; or was he, like Walt Whitman, possessed of a familiar demon who put in a sentence occasionally to mar the perfection of his pages? Macaulay, whose essay is the popular source of information on this subject, finds an explanation in the fact that Machiavelli was an Italian, and that Italians are by mental construction given to wiles, treachery, and furtive homicide, to a degree which the Anglo-Saxon is fortunately exempt from. Especially at this time they were going through an historical process which made the cultivation of certain vices a public necessity. They had long since dispensed with the courage of the lion, and were now compelled to rely on the cunning of the fox. Since they could not crush their enemies with the strength of the boa, they were driven to make use of the venom of the cobra. Where an English gentleman smarting under a grievance would have challenged his aggressor to mortal combat, an Italian would have resorted to a hired assassin; where the English yeoman would strike his adversary with his fist, the Italian peasant would use a stiletto. As a consequence of this, acts that in one country would be considered cowardly and base would be accepted in the other as a matter of course: England would condone the youthful follies of Henry the Fifth, his cruelty, and his ruthless invasion of France, for the sake of his matchless valor and military skill. So would Italy forget the crimes and perfidy of Borgia, in admiration for the boldness and skill with which he surmounted

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all obstacles to his enormous ambition. Then he passes from history to fiction. Where an English audience, Macaulay says, would have little but commiseration for the calamities which Othello brings upon himself through jealousy and credulity, an Italian audience would only feel contempt for the man who allowed himself to be duped by one to whom he had previously refused important favors. On the other hand, they would no doubt applaud Iago's shrewdness and dexterity, — just as James Fisk, Jr., was formerly admired by many Americans, — though they could not approve of his methods. Machiavelli, when he calmly proposed the extirpation of a noble family, could not have imagined that posterity would be shocked by it.

I have substituted Cæsar Borgia in this argument for Francesco Sforza, who is Macaulay's example of a perfidious Italian, because Borgia is an example cited and approved of by Machiavelli. Sforza committed some acts of treachery and a few crimes, but would pass muster anywhere for as good a man as the hero of Trafalgar, whom indeed he greatly resembles, both in his duplicity and his brilliant fighting qualities. He cannot, therefore, serve fairly as an illustration of the case. Altogether this argument seems overwrought, and strained from the point. There is some truth in it, but not enough to cover the subject. It is undeniable that the Latin races, and particularly the Italians, have a different ideal of morality from the Teutonic races. They have special excellencies of their own, and also certain weaknesses. The reputation of the Italians for their power of dissimulation

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has been quite equal to that of the French for their lack of formal sincerity. It is true, also, assassination, especially by poisoning, has been more frequent and horrifying in the annals of Italy than of any other Christian country. Yet do the crimes of Alexander VI. surpass those of Richard III.; and are either to be accounted for on the ground of national differences? We know the poetic horror of Dante, and the eloquent rage of Savonarola for the flagrant corruption of the papacy. The proceedings of the Borgias were not without parallel in Italian history perhaps, but they were without parallel in their own age. What has made them famous but the horror which these excited, for they finally accomplished little except to ruin themselves and their whole family? Their misdeeds were not looked upon with indifference; and the popes who succeeded Alexander for the next half century were fairly good men. Neither does it appear that the treachery of Francesco Sforza to the Venetians differs very much in kind from Nelson's sudden seizure of the Danish fleet in time of peace. Both were dictated by the law of self-preservation. The shrewd Francesco foresaw that affairs would soon take such a turn that his interests and the Venetians would come into conflict. If he had not deserted them, they would have been forced to leave him in the lurch. He acted thus, not as an Italian especially, but as a general of hireling troops, and no better was to have been expected of him. Even if Lorenzo the Magnificent or Julius II. had done the same, the case would barely have a national significance; but they were as a rule faithful

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to their engagements. Since the invasion of the Lombards, there has been no period of Italian history which equals in horrors and atrocities the Wars of the Roses in England, or of the period of the Reformation in France.

Now if "The Prince" represented the current opinion of Italy in the sixteenth century, we should expect to find the same "moral obliquity," not only in Machiavelli's other writings, but in those of various authors of the same period. In the discourses on Livy, it is true there are two passages almost identical with those quoted from "The Prince," and — let us note this as a characteristic trait of the man — there is a tendency in it to vindicate the acts of the Roman conquerors when they carry matters with a high hand; but he invariably excuses himself for doing so, and alleges such reasons for his determination, that even a strict moralist could not find them altogether groundless. The tone of the work is different, and the impression it leaves on the mind of the reader is much pleasanter than that of "The Prince." How Machiavelli's dramas can be brought into court on a question of moral obliquity it is difficult to understand. It would be as fair to hold Molière responsible for the character of Tartuffe, or Lessing for that of Marinelli. In regard to the history of Florence, I lately made a series of references while reading it under various headings, such as "depravity," "evidences of a moral sense," "mistaken judgment," and many others. Now under the head of depravity there are no references to the "History," but there are nine or ten to "The Prince;" while under evidences

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of morality there are ten references to the "History" and five to "The Prince." Nor do I believe there can be found in the "History" a more pronounced instance of moral obliquity than the statement of Thiers that the combined losses of the Prussians and English at Waterloo exceeded by ten thousand killed and wounded those of the French; or than some of Macaulay's own statements in regard to Lord Bacon, Frederick the Great, or in the essay we are now considering.[1] Yet in this essay there are also brilliant and valuable passages. In truth, what he says of Machiavelli would apply with some modification of tone to Macaulay himself. Qualities altogether dissimilar are united in him. We are charmed by the vigor of his writing, and repelled by the weakness of his generalizations. In one paragraph he gives us the clearest insight into the mechanism of political parties or dexterously unravels court intrigues; in the next he stumbles blindly over his subject, like an ambitious and self-sufficient undergraduate. He astonishes us with the variety and extent of his information, as well as by his lack of fixed principles and a philosophical basis. He writes an essay on Queen Elizabeth and calls it "Burleigh and his Times;" he writes an account of the causes which led to the French Revolution and names it "Mira-

[1] After commenting on "the difference between the Italians and their neighbors" (French, Spanish, and Greeks?), he moralizes thus: "A vice sanctioned by the general opinion is merely a vice. The evil terminates in itself. A vice condemned by the general opinion produces a pernicious effect on the whole character. The former is a local malady, the latter a constitutional taint." This surpasses Mephistopheles' advice to the young student.

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beau." There is nothing to speak of about Burleigh or Mirabeau in either of them. In many passages he shows a fine sense of character, especially a clear understanding of human weaknesses; as his artistic delineation of Charles the Second is a good witness. Against this we must place his uncharitable prejudices against William Penn and the Quakers. He shows true penetration when he says that "a reforming age is always fertile to impostors;" but what reckless political judgment it is to call Cæsar Borgia the greatest practical statesman of his time. It would be difficult to improve on his criticism of Machiavelli's comedies, but his remarks on what he is pleased to call "the egotism of Petrarch" prove that he wholly misconceived the nature of egotism, and of subjective poetry as well. As a writer he is lively and interesting, but without grace or elegance of style. His talk is not like conversation in a parlor, but conversation on the sidewalk. Correct and upright in his dealings with men, it is yet to be feared that his moral sense was a good deal blunted by the late dinners and fashionable society of his time. But this is a digression not unlike some of his own.

As "The Prince" stands alone among Machiavelli's works for its ethical peculiarities, so is its author also without a counterpart among Italian writers of the best quality. There is at least only one other, a composer of squibs, epigrams, and pasquinades, the Venetian scourge, Pietro Aretino, who resembles him at all in this respect; but Aretino was notoriously immoral and unprincipled, a sort of literary Cartouche. Ah, it is idle to suppose that a

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great and glorious civilization, such as flourished in Italy in the fifteenth century, could be based on habits of dissimulation, treachery, and cowardice. There can be no great art without courage and sincerity. How evident is the sincerity of Raphael; and how renowned that of Michel Angelo. If these men had been alone in their day they might be considered accidental; but they had hundreds of followers, thousands of appreciative admirers; there were others also very nearly their equals. If they were exceptional geniuses, it may be said that only exceptional conditions make such men possible. Genius is the gift of nature, but its development is the work of man: it requires protection, patronage, and culture. It must be self-reliant, but it also has to depend upon others. In large part we are indebted for Michel Angelo to Lorenzo de' Medici, Pope Julius, and Pope Adrian. His most perfect work was done during the pontificate of Julius II., and Grimm, his biographer, considers that the mental influence of Julius (who according to Macaulay had an ill-regulated mind) was necessary for this. These statesmen must have shared largely in Michel Angelo's noble nature, as Pericles did in that of Sophocles and Phidias, or else they would have been repellent to him, and the relation would not have borne good fruit. It was Lorenzo who took him away from his father, and saved his lofty soul from being crushed out by parental stupidity. Paris is now the chief centre of the fine arts, but there a nature so susceptible as that of Raphael or Correggio would become perverted in its youth, and inevitably go to ruin. There

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would not be sufficient moral health in the community to avert this. In America they would suffer equally from a lack of *protection.* Benvenuto Cellini, to whom Goethe paid the highest of all compliments by translating his memoirs into German, belonged to the lower middle class of Tuscany, was without social refinement and with little education. He was artist, soldier, musician; worked hard, fought bravely, and enjoyed life in a hearty, sensible manner. He is not a scrupulous fellow, but bears malice towards none. He is the Fielding of Italian prose, and thoroughly English in his frankness, directness, and good humor; and yet he is not an exotic, for the people whom he describes breathe the same fresh air and enjoy the same healthy life that he does. I think it must have been the perfect moral sanity of the man, and of his writing, for which Goethe liked him so well.

To make a fair estimate of Italy in the year 1500, we must take into the account men like these, as well as the Borgias and Aretinos. The sincerity of an artist is perhaps the highest type of sincerity, for it consists in a mental attitude which cannot be formulated. It is to be hoped that the popular impression, that the life of an artist is necessarily an effeminate and enervating one, has now pretty much gone out of fashion. There are many such, but they are never of a high rank. Neither are great artistic periods necessarily followed by a national decline, as we see now in the vigorous internal development of Germany. The fruit ripens and the leaves fall, but the tree, unless it is exposed to too severe a winter, will again put forth buds and blossoms in the spring.

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This is what happened in Italy during the seventeenth century, though in a rather abortive manner; for the eclectic school, founded as it was upon a vicious principle, contained many men of genius. There was no lack of courage, no lack of true manliness among Machiavelli's countrymen. Take, as an example, that Genoese mariner, the first to cross the Atlantic, whose name is the plaything of every schoolboy; or that other Genoese who was the first admiral of his age. All the Medici were brave. Piero Capponi cowed the French king in the city hall of Florence, and Francesco Ferucci, whose death was the knell of Florentine liberty, was nowise inferior to the modern Garibaldi. The northern hirelings of Bourbon and Orange, who sacked Rome and reduced Florence, were very roughly handled afterwards by an army of Italians in the plains of Lombardy. Cellini himself helped to defend the Castle of St. Angelo against them. But the highest prize in this line must be awarded to Julius II., who took Cæsar Borgia into his palace, and lived for weeks within striking distance of that human cobra, before having him shut up in a Spanish prison. Eighty years later the best general in the armies of Philip II. was an Italian; and until the middle of the eighteenth century the Piccolomini, Montecuculi, Eugene of Savoy, and a score of lesser lights distinguished themselves in the service of Austria. It was not art which precipitated the decline of Italy. Jesuitism, and the blood-stained gold of Mexico, which gave to the Spaniards an overpowering political importance, were the twin causes of its demoralization and disgrace.

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Professor Reichert, when he commenced to investigate the venom of the rattlesnake, found, to his surprise, that instead of being a single uniform poison, it was composed of three separate and wholly distinct poisons. The processes of nature are not simple, as some of her admirers would have us believe, but in most cases very complicated; and it is the business of man, acting in a rational manner, to bring order and simplicity out of the confusion about him. As it is in external nature, so it is also in the human mind. There is no more intricate study than metaphysics, and if we could investigate the mental methods of a saint, or of a country maiden, either would no doubt be found to have a somewhat composite character. So if we consider those sentences in Machiavelli's "Prince" which seem most obnoxious to us, and treat them according to the cautious and inquisitive principles of scientific research, perhaps we may find in them also that various different influences have combined to produce a single effect. It will be recognized that every man receives at birth a certain mental bias which largely determines the future course of his life; that his profession or occupation has also a modifying influence upon him, and that he is likely also to be prejudiced by the current beliefs and opinions of his time. When these three do not, in some measure, counteract one another, they cause a striking deflection from the normal curve of human perfection.

In the first place, then, we notice that a slightly pessimistic tone pervades the whole treatise; a lack of confidence in human nature. This is not uncom-

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mon in political writings among men who have had an extensive experience in public affairs. Macaulay is by no means free from it; Metternich has been charged with it; and if there is anything more pessimistic than J. Stuart Mill's essay on government one would like to hear of it. His fundamental axiom, that "one man if stronger than another will take from him whatever that other possesses and he desires," is worse than Machiavelli's proposition that "the generality of mankind are wicked and ever ready to break their word," because it denies the possibility of justice or generosity except from interested motives. How many notable statesmen besides Webster and Sumner and Beaconsfield have died gloomy and despondent at the condition of affairs which they were leaving. It says in the preamble to our Constitution, "in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquillity, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, etc.," and the main object of government could hardly be stated better; but the largest share of a statesman's work is of a very different kind. He must keep these general principles in mind, like a sort of north star to guide his course by, but it is no wonder that he often loses sight of them. In politics the fiercest passions of mankind come into play, scarcely less fierce than those which are engendered by war. That the actions of men are wholly prompted by self-interest is the shallowest sophistry; but they are largely so prompted, and it is necessary and right that they should be. All the different interests of the community meet in the political centre,

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each represented by talented and able men, and each pushing its claim to the utmost, regardless of all others, and of the general welfare. This is the side of human nature with which the statesman comes into daily contact. To decide between different interests, and to curb, control, and direct the energy with which they are forced upon him is often cruel hard work for the most high-minded administrator; not unfrequently more than he is able to accomplish. Whichever way he may look he sees nothing but *self-interest* in human form, and it is no wonder if at last he is driven to the conclusion that egotism is the rule and patriotism the exception, — that it is only "the remnant" that can be depended upon. Besides the honest partisans who press their side issues with the zeal of fanaticism, the patriot politician is also obliged to deal with a class of people who are only more virtuous than common criminals in that they are more prudent, who take to intrigue, dissimulation, and the construction of mischief as naturally as cold-blooded animals take to the water. Such men may not be without a certain lukewarm regard for their native country, but they do not let that interfere with the advancement of their own fortunes by the most unscrupulous means, and they find, in the confusion and strain of political life, a fruitful field for the cultivation of their peculiar talents. There are enough of this sort to be found now in America, but in the Middle Ages, when crime was more frequently avenged than punished, they were much more bold and numerous. He who has had experience of them cannot be altogether blamed for

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exclaiming sometimes with Frederick II., "Of what infernal stuff is human nature made?"

But in Machiavelli's time politics were at their very worst. It was the period of transition in Europe from the polity of the Middle Ages to that of modern times, and the receding tide of the past was mingled in a surging charybdis with the advancing flood of a new era. Everywhere in France, Spain, Italy, and Austria, local independence was being crushed out, to be replaced by a despotic centralization with the divine right of kings very near at hand. During the last five centuries Italian civilization had been wrought out in a conflict between the pope and the German emperor. In 951 Otho I., having been called into the country by Pope John XII. to restore order and drive out the Saracens, was invested with the imperial dignity. This he happily accomplished, and under his protection Italy started forth into new life and prosperity; but from this time the German emperors considered themselves entitled to superintend Italian affairs, and by the customs of the feudal period they certainly had the right to do so. This, however, was not agreeable to the Italians, since no people will submit to being controlled by a foreign power if they can possibly prevent it; and hence arose the most peculiar system of politics of which there is any record. The pope, in order to maintain himself amongst the small Italian principalities, was obliged to reinforce his temporal power and material means. This brought him into immediate collision with the emperor on questions of authority; for as the highest spiritual potentate he could yield

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to no one else in dignity of position. Legally his temporal and spiritual powers might be distinguished, but with the public it was impossible. His material means were insignificant compared with the emperor's, but his spiritual influence over the minds of men was enormous. This grew continually greater, as the crusades stirred up religious enthusiasm, until it overtopped everything. Alexander or Timour never encountered such a terrible adversary: it was like fighting with an invisible enemy. He could unite the scattered states of Italy against the emperor, and if that were not enough call in the king of France to his aid. Then, if still defeated, he would have recourse to the terrors of excommunication. In this manner the pope finally gained complete ascendency, utterly destroying the magnificent Hohenstaufen race, to the great injury of both Germany and Italy. It was a policy like that of the viper towards its benefactor, but had for its excuse the necessity of national independence, without which there can be no right development of a people.

Italian unity, however, did not exist, and it was not for the pope's interest that it should exist. He could not be the chief executive of the country any more than an English sovereign can be a leader in the House of Commons. All Christendom would have cried out against it. The emperor especially would have come down upon it like the wolf on the fold. At the same time a king of Italy was something which the supreme pontiff dreaded more even than the emperor, who sometimes disappeared beyond the Alps for several years together. Neither did the

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small Italian states desire that the papacy should become more powerful than any one of themselves. Veneration for the papal office was always greatest at great distances, — as commonly happens, — and the governments of Milan, Venice, Florence, Bologna, and the rest were jealous of the papacy and of one another. Both the pope and the emperor encouraged the foundation of free cities as a check upon the influence of the lesser princes; and each city had its local politics of two inevitable parties, one of which was supported in course of time by the emperor and the other necessarily by the pope. The violence with which Italy was racked during the Middle Ages by the factions of Guelph and Ghibeline is thus explained. It is bad enough when a city possesses within itself, as the Italian cities did, the power of banishment and death for political offenses; but here, weighted on one side by the authority of the pope and on the other by power of the emperor, civil dissensions were raised to a magnitude far beyond their true importance. The fires of party passion were kept up with an oxy-hydrogen blowpipe.

This curious political fabric was particularly well adapted to the fertile ingenuity and versatility of the Italian mind. To form a league against the emperor, and afterwards to set the most powerful members of it fighting amongst themselves, was the pope's chief business. Alliances were formed and dissolved again like smoke. If a state or city became more prosperous and powerful than its neighbors, it was certain to be attacked by them in concert, and when upon the point of being crushed by superior

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odds it was equally sure to be preserved by having its cause espoused by a seceding minority of its adversaries. Or at the last moment the emperor suddenly appeared out of the Brenner Pass, and turned the tables for everybody. The free cities made war on the country nobility, and compelled them to live inside of their walls; and the nobles in revenge conspired together against the liberty of the cities. No other country has ever been cursed with such politics. Ancient Greece comes nearest to it, and next Germany after the close of the Hohenstaufen dynasty. Yet these three and the Netherlands are the only countries in which the arts of design have reached a high degree of perfection; and there may be some mysterious connection between that fact and the absence of a centralized government. The artist, at any rate, would not suffer from the benumbing influence of the fashions in a great metropolis. Whoever the persons are who set the fashions they are not trained to a keen perception of the beautiful.

Certainly in Italian politics sincerity, fidelity, disinterestedness, would have been as much out of place as they might be now among the stock gamblers of Wall Street. Intrigue, dissimulation, and treachery were an absolute necessity in such an element. A high-minded statesman like Hildebrand, who reformed the Catholic Church, might object to making use of these methods, and probably did so as rarely as possible; but to avoid them altogether was to be left stranded in the shoals. The fear of treachery became the father of treachery. The enemy of yesterday was the friend of to-day and the traitor of to-morrow.

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Machiavelli says in his "History of Florence" (B. I. 6): "Henry of Luxemburg had been elected emperor, and came to Rome for his coronation (1315 A. D.), although the pope was not there. His coming occasioned great excitement in Lombardy; for he sent all the banished to their homes, whether they were Guelphs or Ghibelines; and in consequence of this, one faction endeavoring to drive out the other, the whole province was filled with war and confusion; nor could the emperor with all his endeavors abate its fury." This shows conclusively how hopeless it sometimes is in politics to attempt what is abstractly right.

This was the profession to which Machiavelli was trained. The principles upon which Italian statesmen had acted for centuries were accepted by him as a matter of course. This explains, I think, the graceful *sang-froid* with which he sets them forth. Had he possessed more of Dante's ethical quality, or Barbarossa's downright sense of justice, he would probably have chosen a different profession, and left the affairs of state to others. We can be thankful that it was not so; that he could serve his native city well and bravely at a time when trustworthy men were fortunately still in request, and that he could bring the light of practical experience to bear on his historical studies. But this personal bias forms another element in the alembic of "The Prince." The portrait of him which has been preserved to us gives the impression of a small, erect, determined-looking man, with an expression on the face which reminds one slightly of the St. George of Donatello: a man ap-

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parently of the nervous-bilious temperament, inclined to look on the dark side and calculate for the worst; a resolute, strong-headed fellow, self-contained, who might go through life without asking or giving sympathy. The rather small head, about the size of Byron's, has a compressed look as if there were strong forces within; the short, stout nose may perhaps indicate obstinacy; and the eyes are steady, inscrutable, unflinching, in their gaze. It certainly is not a bad face, but neither is it an attractive one. There is no aspect of humanity, benevolence, or compassion in it — least of all a look of spirituality. The man was a realist in the most limited sense of the word. I feel as if his *shell* was harder than that of other people. It is not a noble physiognomy. He was neither an Aristides the Just nor a Henry IV. of France; neither high-minded nor great-hearted; but most like that keen, quick-witted, inflexible Frederick of Prussia, "the steel-bright soul," as Carlyle calls him. There is ample evidence of his realistic narrowness in a letter written on the eighth of May, 1497, describing to a friend in Rome one of the last of Savonarola's discourses in public before the counter-revolution which destroyed him. Machiavelli belonged to the party opposed to Savonarola, which, it may be said, contained every person of sound judgment in Florence, as well as all the profligate. His practical good sense made clear to him how dangerous to the public the daring moral absolutism of this eloquent monk might become; but beyond that he could see nothing. Of the purity of Savonarola's motives, of the sublime religious elevation of his mind, which

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so charmed Michel Angelo and even fascinated Lorenzo dei Medici, Machiavelli had no conception. He even believed that Savonarola's enthusiasm was wholly a trick of rhetoric to inflame the minds of the multitude, and secure himself in his position of authority by undermining that of other influential citizens. After an account of the discourse, as unfriendly as possible, Machiavelli finishes thus: "And he [Savonarola] has turned all his fury against the pope and his emissaries, terming him, as he does, the vilest of men; it is thus that he veers from point to point, to paint and color his fraud and cunning." Now it was quite true that the pope Alexander Borgia was one of the vilest of men; and if Machiavelli had possessed spiritual insight he never would have written a book like "The Prince."

Machiavelli was at this time in his twenty-ninth year. Five years later he was sent by the Florentine government as ambassador to Cæsar Borgia, who was then at the height of his power. The party which had accomplished the downfall of Savonarola naturally became the ally of Alexander, and of his son; and their opposition to the return of the Medici was another good reason for it. Cæsar himself was very much such a man as Aaron Burr, of brilliant intellect but of a coarse and ordinary nature. Nature had lavished every bounty on him, excepting her best, mental *quality*. He was born a prince, but had the soul of a bull-fighter; the statue was of heroic mould, but its material was dross. There is no human combination more dangerous to the man himself as well as others; for it requires penetration, a sense of real-

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ity, to see the man as he actually is. These natural impostors draw ambitious young men and giddy women about them, as a magnet draws iron filings. Machiavelli understood diplomacy too well to be overreached by Cæsar, but he was evidently fascinated by him. It is surprising that he should have been; but the numerous passages in "The Prince" in which he illustrates his theme by references to the policy of Cæsar Borgia, and even the exceptional tone of some of them, leave no doubt of it. He even satisfied himself that Cæsar was acting from patriotic motives, that his severe measures were needed for the public good. "Cæsar Borgia," he says, "was accounted cruel; but it was to that cruelty he was indebted for reuniting Romagna to his other states, and establishing there the peace and tranquillity which it so much required." One would think it had been better to have taken his illustrations from the career of Julius II. There must have been something in Cæsar's slashing methods peculiarly attractive to Machiavelli's mind.

It is just in this that Borgia made his mistake in practice, and Machiavelli in theory. There have been occasions in the world's history, and there may be again, when the violation of a treaty, or the taking of human life without form of law, has been necessary and justifiable; exceptional cases for which no rule would apply. That any system or code of politics, however, could be based upon such principles and bring benefit to mankind, is an error similar to that of Ignatius Loyola. Machiavelli indeed anticipated Loyola; and in both cases it was largely the influ-

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ence of their different professions. What the Jesuits are to be blamed for is not the doctrine that the end justifies the means, but *for making use of means which the end could not justify.* For in most cases it is only the *end* which does justify the *means.* What, for instance, justifies the wholesale slaughter of cattle and sheep except our use of them as food? What justifies killing our enemies in war, unless it be that we preserve the nation by doing so? What can justify the small deceptions we practice upon children but the necessity of preserving them from knowledge which would be a certain injury to them? Indeed, if we consider it well, what justifies the use we make of our time in this world but those worthy objects to which we devote it, — and it is to be feared that much of it is spent in a way which will never be justified. There is no absolute standard of morality, and those who try to live by one do much harm to themselves and often a good deal to other people. Even hypocrisy, the most contemptible of vices, is sometimes a virtue. There is no standard, but an ideal of morality, to which we strive to conform as much as possible; and those who have lived the noblest lives are aware how difficult that is. The captain of a sailing vessel wishes to make a certain port in the shortest time, but he cannot sail always straight towards it. He has to suit himself to every wind that blows; to tack here and there; to lie to in severe storms, or even to go wholly out of his course for the chance of obtaining more favorable breezes. In like manner are we obliged to steer our course over the eternal deep, sacrificing to adverse winds

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much or little according to the force with which they blow. In a recent publication the lives of Longfellow and Goethe were compared together, much to the advantage of the former; but it would have been as just to compare a summer excursion to the Azores with the circumnavigation of the globe. There is a point, however, beyond which the sacrifice of means to ends should never pass. Whenever one nearly balances the other, whenever the gain and loss approach to an equality, and this fact continually repeats itself, we may know that our course is no longer upon the high seas, but towards some frozen and unnavigable northwest passage, — that the voyage we proposed has proved to be impossible.

Such was the condition both of the Catholic Church and of Italian politics at the commencement of the sixteenth century. Each had become so bad that a violent revolution alone could save it. Machiavelli saw this plainly in the case of the papacy, but was blind to it in his own profession. In his "Essay on Livy" he blames the pope and cardinals for their evil practices and for having caused the disintegration of Italy. With every political structure there comes a time when it ceases to respond sufficiently to the requirements for which it was instituted; and then, unless it contains within itself the germs of a new development, its end is near.

The spiritual authority of the pope, which had served but poorly to maintain cohesion among the states of Italy even at its height, had now declined to almost nothing. What had been originally a badly constructed edifice was now undermined and totter-

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ing to its fall. No human power could save it: and with it must go all that was beautiful and great in Italian life. A political vacuum was being formed again in that devoted country after a thousand years; the Frenchman and Spaniard were ready to rush in. Who can blame Machiavelli for hoping against what was hopeless, and dreaming of desperate measures to save that which was doomed? If Florence could no longer preserve its independence by the wisdom and valor of its first citizens, craft and dissimulation could not help it long. If Italy could only be reformed by extirpating the country nobility, reformation had come too late. The sacrifice of means had become equal to the end in view: the day of retribution was at hand. Machiavelli did not, or would not, perceive this, but a certain monk in Wittenberg knew it only too well, and with courage equal to his insight struck the blow which has divided Europe ever since.

It was the lack of *Italian unity*, rather than the inherent weakness of the Italian character, which precipitated the rapid decline of the following century. It was the Church of Rome which prevented this unity. For the truth of this there could be no better witness — if witness were needed to so plain a proposition — than Machiavelli himself. In the discourses on Livy, book first and chapter twelfth, he says: "We Italians then owe to the Church of Rome and to her priests our having become irreligious and bad; but we owe her a still greater debt, and one that will be the cause of our ruin, namely, that the church has kept and still keeps our country divided." Presumably it was for this plain exposure that his

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writings were condemned by the Council of Trent, and anathematized by several following popes. Cardinal Pole, who was the first to exclaim against the atrocious doctrines in "The Prince," and who afterwards helped to promote the human conflagrations at Smithfield, may have had a similar reason at heart. It is well to note in this connection that, during the long struggle between the pope and the emperor, the bishops in the large cities of northern Italy were nearly always to be found on the side of the latter; a fact which the historian Hallam finds himself quite unable to account for, as he is unable to account for the lack of concerted action in Italian politics, except upon the ground of "dark, long-cherished hatreds, and that implacable bitterness which, at least in former ages, distinguished the private manners of Italy." But such passions always come into play when a people is divided into small independent communities. Petty local jealousies strike root and grow to great dimensions, unless controlled by the stern mandate of a higher authority. The Lombard cities preferred to dissipate their wealth in fighting with one another than to pay a light tribute to the Hohenstaufens.

Lastly, we ought to remember that "The Prince" was written for a special object. It was not published until after Machiavelli's death, and possibly was not intended by him for publication. The character of the man to whom it was dedicated is also an element in the problem, but of that unhappily we know little. We have his statue by Michel Angelo, an elegant but muscular figure with a long, sinewy neck and a head of the meanest dimensions. If the

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face expresses anything, it is insensibility to danger. There is no trace upon it of mental or moral endowment. Perhaps it is not a good likeness, but it has certainly not been idealized. The remark of the sculptor that in one hundred years no one would care how those Medici looked, that is, Lorenzo II. and Juliano, has a wide significance. It seems likely there was little that could be said of him. There are certain men of sordid nature to whom, though not vicious themselves, all talk of virtue, morality, goodness, and especially reform, is instinctively hateful. They dislike being made conscious of their deficiency in these attributes, which they find it troublesome to imitate. Lorenzo may have been one of this sort. If he was, it would readily explain the tone of guarded concession to morality which appears at intervals in "The Prince," as, for instance, "It is not necessary, however, for a prince to possess all the good qualities I have enumerated, but it is indispensable that he should appear to have them." Counseling a narrow and dull-witted chief magistrate, whether he be prince or president, must be somewhat like driving a pig to market. Machiavelli had been too long in politics to be able to keep out of them, for no other human occupation is so absorbing. One of his cardinal maxims is that a statesman must watch the changes of his time and suit himself to them. He saw that the Medici were carrying all before them in Rome, and that his only chance hereafter for benefiting himself or his country must come through their hands. Let those blame him who are without reproach themselves.

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"The Prince," after all that we may say of it, remains substantially a picture of the politics of those days. Machiavelli approved of dissimulation under certain circumstances, but he himself has told us the truth. Like Shakspere, he spoke out his mind with no reservation. What a revelation of human nature is Henry VI. or Richard III.! The poet has given us in dramatic form what Machiavelli says in plain prose. In these plays we watch the extirpation of the Plantagenet family as it proceeds from one branch to another. Was it not the last of them, the Countess of Salisbury, who was put to death for that reason by Henry VIII.? The veneration for hereditary right during the Middle Ages was so strong that it cannot be doubted such acts were sometimes necessary for the public good. Fortunately, they are so no longer; but we can be grateful both to the poet and the historian, that they saw the life before them without illusions, that they comprehended it clearly, and that they concealed nothing of it from us. Such a past seems more real than the present. A faithful account of our politics now would not wear so ferocious an aspect, but it might not be much pleasanter to contemplate, and quite as startling to those who dream that the millennium is close at hand. The tricks of lobbyists, the artifices to win voters, the clap-trap speeches, the boundless misrepresentations; the use of calumny in political canvasses, — the pot calling the kettle black again; dreary congressional debates which end in nothing and were intended mainly to end in nothing; patriotic men, after vainly endeavoring to accomplish something, defeated and

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driven into retirement; coarse flattery of the public, — all this forms a spectacle more instructive than edifying. Tennyson was not far wrong when he called the last general election in England "a popular torrent of lies upon lies." What is at first a slight distortion, or exaggeration of facts, soon becomes a mental habit, and in course of time neither orator nor audience can distinguish longer what is real from what is imaginary. In this manner political aspirants may attain the objects of their ambition, but they lose by it that practical good sense which is necessary for the conduct of affairs. The perusal of Machiavelli's "Prince" might instruct them in the awful seriousness of political responsibility, even if statesmen are no longer in danger of losing their heads for it.

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DANTE'S POLITICAL ALLEGORY

DANTE evidently intended to illustrate his own views in regard to the politics of his time by the celebrated enigma in *Purgatorio* xxxii.

To describe this briefly in its main features: — he has placed a triumphal car, drawn by a griffon, beneath a tree loaded with flowers and fruit; an eagle comes down crashing through the branches of the tree, and strikes the car, making it rock from side to side, but without upsetting it; then a fox comes, lean and hungry, who takes possession of the car, but is driven away by the reproof of *Beatrice;* then the eagle swoops down again, leaving the car covered with its feathers; a dragon comes out of the earth and rips up the floor of the car with its barbed tail. Then the car, covered with feathers, puts forth seven heads, with horns like beasts, at the four sides. Next comes a giant in company with a harlot; the former plucking the leaves from the tree, and the latter seating herself in the car; but when the harlot turns her eyes on Dante, the giant flogs her unmercifully, and drives the equipage into a forest out of sight.

There have been numberless interpretations of this allegory; but Dugdale, the English prose translator of the *Purgatorio*, sums up the opinion of previous commentators as follows: —

The tree is intended to represent Christ; and its flowers are the foretaste of his glory. The triumphal car represents the Christian Church; the descent of the eagle into the tree, the persecution by the Roman emperors;

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the fox is heresy; the second descent of the eagle, with the loss of his feathers, represents the benefits conferred by Constantine. The dragon is supposed to be either the Devil or Mahomet; and the seven heads are supposed by some to represent the seven deadly sins, and by others, the seven sacraments. (Take your choice.) The giant is evidently the king of France, and the harlot represents the prostitution of the church to personal ends. The disappearance in the woods signifies the transference of the Holy See to Avignon. *Beatrice* represents theology.

Now, it is possible that Dante intended by this to represent the history of the church in allegorical form, but his treatment is much too meagre for such a large subject. Is it not more likely that he was minded to symbolize the condition of the Church of Rome in his own time? Looked at in this manner all the figures unite to form a perfect whole. The tree cannot represent Christ and his heavenly triumph, for Dante expressly states in the next canto that it is the same tree from which Eve plucked the forbidden fruit: canto xxxiii., 60. Inferentially it may be intended for Christianity itself, by which the true knowledge of good and evil was supposed to have been first divulged.

Neither is it likely that Dante would have made use of a triumphal car as a symbol for the Christian Church. The expression is lacking in humility. We may suppose, therefore, that Dante intended it for the temporal power of the popes, which, when properly applied and directed to Christian teaching and good works, caused the tree to flourish, but when this was allied with the powers of darkness its flowers drooped and its leaves withered.

The first descent of the eagle is not exactly a fair symbol for the persecutions of the early Christians, for the

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church withstood them like a rock. On the contrary, it serves remarkably well for the reign of Frederick II., who repeatedly shook the papal government to its foundations, without, however, quite carrying his point.

There is a significant allusion to the second descent of the eagle, xxxii., 138, *Forse con intenzione casta e benigna*, which would not apply to Constantine, the shrewd politician, but is quite what we should expect from Dante concerning the chivalrous Henry VII., for whom it was no doubt intended.

Here, as in the first canto of the *Inferno*, the fox is probably intended for heresy; but it is a symbol that would be better suited to skepticism, which penetrates everywhere but finds no permanent abiding-place.

Dugdale supposes that *Beatrice* represented theology; and Scartazzini speaks of her as religious science, which comes to the same purpose; but she appears everywhere as the antagonist of science. Does she not rather represent religious faith, pure and simple, — man's recognition of the divine love? Dante finds her seated under the tree of Christianity.

I believe there is no difference of opinion in regard to the meaning of the giant, the harlot, and the disappearance of the strangely decorated car; but what does the griffon stand for? Dante speaks of him as a creature of "twofold nature." May not this refer to the nature of mankind in general, which is at once spiritual and carnivorous?

In the last canto of the *Purgatorio*, *Beatrice* propounds a prophecy in the form of a riddle, to the effect that "a messenger from God," D U X,[1] will come to slay the giant and his companion. This has been interpreted as referring to Can Grande of Verona; but the number is a

[1] Really, *cinquecento dieci e cinque*, equals D V X = Dux.

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remarkable prophecy, for the first revolutions in Italy tending to national unity took place a little more than five hundred years after Dante's death; and the Reformation began in 1520.

However, we are not to suppose that Dante possessed such remarkable insight for future events as this would indicate; and his immediate purpose was evidently the organization of an Italian power that would be strong enough both to repel foreign invaders, and to prevent the pope from interfering in purely secular affairs. This never came to pass until 1860, and since that time there has been peace and prosperity in an united Italy.

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